

#51
WINTER
2008

BRUTARIAN

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THE HALL MONITORS

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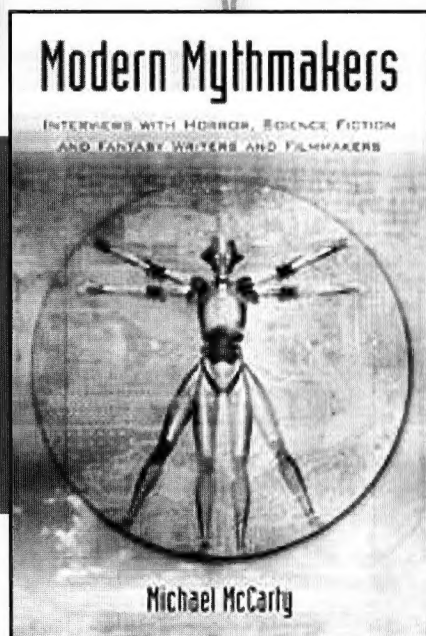
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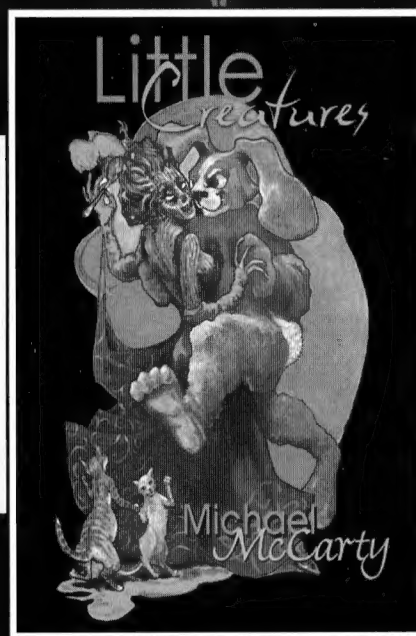


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“
*Woman Is Thy Wealth;
Have But One Woman,
Dress, Undress,
and Fondle That Woman.”*
— *Honore de Balzac*

**BRUTARIAN
NO. 51**

Spring 2008

Cover Design By Brian Horrorwitz

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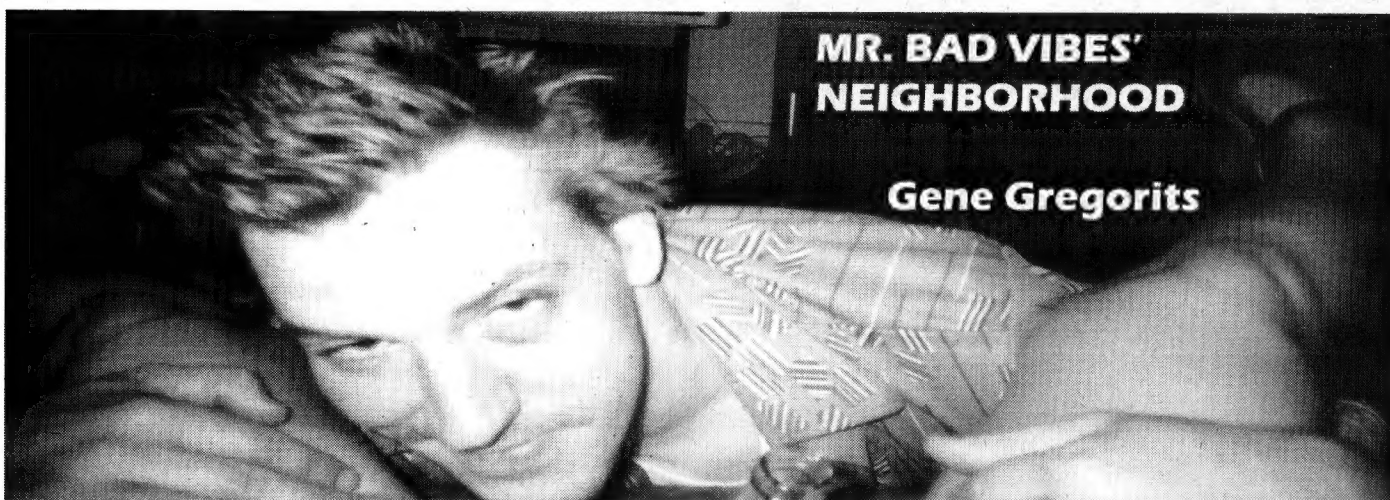
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**MR. BAD VIBES'
NEIGHBORHOOD**

Gene Gregorits

Spring 08

I

I'm as kicked in the balls sick of this rancid charade as you are, but the times demand my own special brew; so when the announcement is made, the deadline set, I get to perk perk perkin' (for whose sake I really don't know). This column shames everyone, and will continue that way until I find Jesus or permit the miracle of twelve step faith to pierce my thick skull. (If you can convince me that I'm not just as ill without the piss, I'll give it a go. You'd be the first.) I haven't a fucking thing in my head; I'll admit it. Got groceries, wine, got my alleycat, got my fairy tales and fables, got a rented room, got one hundred channels, the new Kathleen Edwards' album, and several thousand films on DVD. But a new column? Oh sure, of course! I opine and I educate! I clear the air, watch me working, a god damn carpenter ant of a poet, and a pundit, and a good old all round fucking punter, ain't I? Get wise, little darlings! I've gone off the deep end. Not a single word left in me. Fried beans, you better believe it. I've gone underground, except for this gig. I said it as clear and cold as ice, and I meant it: I QUIT. Quitting, retreating, duck and covering, languishing stone-faced in pilfered loot and wallowing angrily in one foxhole or another in the permanent exile that is my birthright. (Don't try

telling me I don't have a career.) But still, no one cares when I've had enough! It's never enough as far as you're concerned! Still now, my forehead sticky with sweat caused by the high powered radiation cooked up in my bloodstream after several months of wine sulfites and cheap hops and barley. It's true, all I can handle is channel surfing and gallons of orange juice, hot tea, and chicken soup! (What a fix! I coulda been a fish, but nooooo....I had to be a PERSON. THANKS BUDDHA!) Yes, more words are anticipated and more of this demented dog and pony show is demanded. What do you want? Oh, I get it: point of view. Frame of reference. Perspective. Philosophy and politics. Ideals and ethics. Honor. Redemption. Lucidity. Educated analysis. Moral vision. Obsessive hypotheses. Fair and balanced. The human side of things. The practical side of things. But I can't! I only see things in extremes! Pinkos and Nazis. Slaves and tyrants. Third World War. Conspiracy theories. Good government, bad government. Politics, politics, politics. Every fucking stiff in the land is ready to tell you what's wrong with the world, and why, and how, and where, and when, and what. But all you want to do is sit down and silently seek whatever obscure solace you

squirreled away for exactly this moment, sometime during your double shift at the miserable job. But they won't let you have it. They've solved every international conflict, armed with nothing more than beer and whiskey, and there will be no quiet until the entire barroom address has been concluded to the proper satisfaction of Billy Blowhard. No matter where I try to hide, it's inevitable that my peace of mind will be ruined before too long. Sooner or later, an arrogant, slovenly cocksucker who always says too much, too fucking loud, will follow me around like a lost dog until he's exhausted himself. Such parasites do not require affirmation, and they do not depend on stimulation of any kind; but watch out if you are fuckstupid enough to encourage the barking mutt, because then the deal is done, your fate is sealed: you'll never get them to shut up. They can motormouth literally for years at a stretch using mere grunts of acknowledgement as fuel. Sometimes this kind of cretinous jabberjaw will be a professional sports-loving cunt; but more often than not, it's politics he'll specialize in. And I've said it before: America is doomed. When every third person you see in the street is engaged in desperate chatter on a three inch phone device, I am simply incapable of compassion or hope. Only the animals and the truly poverty-stricken can expect an ounce of my sympathy. (Actually, that would be empathy, wouldn't it?)

This American mess, the corporate takeovers, urban sprawl, the obliteration of all simplicity and all decorum! America was a more likeable empire when its hypocrisy defined it. What do we have now? Maximum vulgarity! Too lazy and too arrogant to even bother with preposterous notions of purity or righteousness. McDonalds, Britney's twat, American Idol for the vulgarian hicks. ESPN, Sharper Image, and Brooks Brothers for the vulgarian yuppies. From Dogpatch to Wall Street, these are the greedy, guileless motherfuckers who

define the New America. On the other end of the ideological axis, witness a different kind of spineless turd: the modern progressive liberal. The most unconscionable far-left variant is the snotty university heathen, a self-serving phony who gets off on haranguing comparatively dignified passers-by with their foaming anti-Bush propaganda and save-the-world claptrap. Somehow, these doughy, sanctimonious effiminates are even worse than the rednecks; and odds are, they themselves will be yuppies before the age of thirty. Until then, you can find them blocking traffic, wielding picket signs and bullhorns most days of the week in most major American cities. These people are far too privileged to understand the world they're trying to change, and almost certainly a far more terrifying threat to me than the planet-wide environmental crises and political crises they have conveniently used to fill the stagnant void of their cowardly lives. Any of these people who go on to create art will create art which reflects middle or upper class values! Those who become politicians will provide the same lip service and play the same game. Those who write best selling polemics will move to Hollywood and hang out with obnoxious, unfunny stand-up comedians. Enough on the subject. Politics is far too dirty a business for any but the truly reptilian and sociopathic at heart. Even a few snarling paragraphs on this disease taints a person with sickness, and I've already stored up enough of that to last me a thousand years.

I am threatened by Ugly Humanity, which is



problem #1. Nothing will ever be solved until this narcissistic freak show of a nation is humbled, and I think it's understood by now, especially by the pothead fuckwits screaming revolution, that only tragedy will accomplish that. Until then it'll be cash and trash and murder, same as always! No illusions, no facade! More than mere spectacle: porno-holocaust! It gets to some people more than others. My on-going bout with wordlessness is without doubt exacerbated by the conceited, delusional political debates I can't help overhearing. But even blather such as this has nothing on the brutal devastation wrought by a Bon Jovi singalong session roaring from drunk hipsters during a nice game of pool. (By the way: FUCK POOL.) Yet I am out and about every single night! A lunkheaded masochist, that's me all the way. I soldier forth, somehow! My friends are tolerant, and they claim

to trust me when I say I know what I'm doing! Of course I don't, and they don't buy it, never have, never will! Just part of the game of knowing me, I suppose. Those friends of mine, poor dears. They deserve better. So here's your lumbering, ungainly pariah back again, with another installment of "Why Isn't He Dead Yet," rife with all the usual elements. (Little secret I'll share, between you and me: I'd rather bash myself in the kisser with a crowbar than sit down with a WRITING MISSION. As a matter of fact, this wailing miscarriage will most likely be my final contribution to Brutarian Magazine. Save your applause until I'm finished you vindictive cunts.)

I'm charmed to see that some of you have the time and money to play with yourselves the way you do, to play with ideas, to have the distinct privilege of student or ex-student, flagrantly, feverishly working away on your grotesque organs

under the guise of art or politics, or fashion or style or culture. There's no way to shine brightly in any of these ignorant obsessions, because no matter how passionate your love, no matter how soul-wrenching your dedication, no matter how galvanized with learned purpose you are, a heartbreaking thoughtlessness is all that sticks when the tide washes back out. I don't wait for that, because stagnant cesspools such as American pop trash and American bohemia wouldn't exist if there *were* tides in those regions to begin with. To an extent, that explains why I'm still around, or why I bother to stick my head out every now and again: to remind you of that! No joke! Maybe I can kick up a little wind! Yes, I know your stance on all this, and on me as well. Thankfully, I don't have much time for pontificating on your grinning mob of shoegazers and day-glo freakazoids; I have a shit job to worry about, and I'm never quite caught up on sleep. I'm just a simple working class Gene, who can not, no matter how hard he tries, forget completely the Andy Warhols and Dave Eggers of the world. Who can not drink enough alcohol or discover enough decent humanist art to soothe his aching, sometimes paralyzing



convulsions, the convulsions that, because of dirty politics and greedy mongoloid yuppies, because of mollycoddled pinheads and black hearted pussyhounds, have made it so that he can only produce convulsive writing, so that he can exist only in a convulsive state. Thanks to you fuckers, my reality has become one which is wholly adverse to writing. That's how it is when all of the things that nearly every person you talk to does serve only to awaken a temple- pounding hopelessness. Not imagination, but a self reflexive and immeasurably toxic nesting instinct, a flight instinct, a reptilian terror that shames me deeply when I know with a virulence emanating from my very cells that hipster fetish clowns and hipster intellectual racists and hipster environmentalists are the real reptiles. The reptiles are the rock and roll wannabes, and the rock and roll almoses, the rock and roll already's, and the rock and roll has beens. The reptiles are art school slobes and pop art jack-offs. The reptiles are misogynistic connoisseurs of "psychobilly" and funny-cars, the reptiles torture their parents with sex changes and ugly tattoos, and the reptiles never feel genuine altruism or world-sorrow unless they're inebriated among elderly street people at a hipster dive bar. The reptiles are worse than the establishment which they claim to understand better than every intelligence agency combined, and which they take great delight in criticizing like rabid ferrets on the verge of starvation. Sometimes the reptiles will attack their own kind, they are usually the "intellectual racist" type, i.e. BOYD RICE fans, and that's a sight to see! A preening, posturing sub-normal sideshow like the rest of them, sharing with the clowns a frothy anti-establishment attitude, and a woefully poor sense of humor. Never understanding the bigger picture, the slimy joke, promoting themselves as Nazis because it's amusing to watch the art students scream bloody murder.

I have nothing to do with any of this goofy shit, please understand. Sadly, my last book would give you the impression that I do. And that's no doubt my own fault.

I'm just a working class Mr. Bad Vibes, just a trampled romantic with a history of putting his money where his mouth is, and a history of naïve assumptions which resulted in a well-documented pattern of foolhardy martyrdom, of general failure in life and in love. What's important is that I've seen enough to know what the fuck I'm talking about. Because instead of fraternizing with "peers"

out of parasitic need for affirmation, or indulging desperately in the humiliating public mutual-masturbation sessions of "activists" and "protestors" (political matters which I've done enough of my own independent research of on an anthropological level to observe these sniveling brats correctly, from afar, objectively), I founded the meaning of my life on antiquated romantic principles that have to this day remained unbroken, despite disaster. Forget the train wreck. I've designed this life of mine in such a way that I couldn't turn back if I wanted to. (No matter how redundant it may be, I should point out that I'm often guilty of second guessing myself, begging for MERCY! Every few months an attempt is made, a power-grab, out of idiot fear, to snatch what's left of a more civilized destiny. But it fails, because I am toxic; you know that and the grueling re-conditioning process is begun anew. I'm kept limber this way.)

It's reaching a point where- wait a minute, that was my last column, wasn't it? Forgive me, I assumed we were still in the intro phase. It slipped my mind, this column's been erupting for a few years now. Doesn't matter, I guess. I originally intended to write of recent travels; but who am I speaking to anyway? A throng of irony-obsessed, utterly protected, intellectually uptight, "environmentally aware" cellphone junkies? If there's anyone else, they have my apologies. Let's just get on with it. The beach. There's your frame of reference. Schizoid sentimental bitch-weeping. About THE BEACH. I suppose the desert debacles of Phoenix 07 and Los Angeles 07 will have to go undocumented. Too bad. Of all three travels, this was the most paradoxical and thus, the most relevant.

It is my fondest hope that I won't have anything new to share between now and issue fifty-two, that spring and summer will see only film criticism and job drudgery and new romances so deliciously vanilla that I'll be unable to write about them. Who wants to hear about snuggling? Not me! Not if it isn't mine!

So here's to the end of my sewer crawl! MR. BAD VIBES CINEMATHEQUE! Next issue, you'll see! For now, enjoy my LAST CONFESSION. If movies aren't your thing, GOOD LUCK WITH THE NEXT! I hear another SMALL PRESS REVOLUTION is RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER! Who knows what precious specimens the next wave will wash up! You never know, it might be in this very magazine! Goodnight!

OCEAN CITY

(September)

No one on the road, / No one on the beach. / A feelin' in the air, / That summer's out of reach.

– Don Henley

Way down below the ocean, / Where I wanna be, she may be.

– Donovan

I get a few days off work and make for Ocean City, Maryland because the off-season rates are cheap and the water sounds better than another pukey forty-eight hours in half-ass Baltimore. A girl's been bothering me, and people keep observing that my sickly pallor is greener than usual.

The ride takes three hours. Ocean City's Greyhound Station is a tiny shack just a few blocks off the main bridge, towards the south end of the boardwalk. This resort town was always very special to me, and I'm here to find out if there's any trace of that wonder left, two-and-a-half decades later. Ocean City is stretched across a narrow strip of land that runs parallel to Maryland's Eastern Shore, separated by a mile-wide channel. The three-mile boardwalk has the occasional eyesore worth investigating, and like any east coast boardwalk, there is a rugged quality informed by the changing seasons and the spookiness of so much land's end history. Ocean City was founded about one hundred fifty years ago, I'm told. Physically, it bears more resemblance to a decidedly rural area like Nantucket than to closer towns such as Atlantic City or Ocean City, New Jersey. Ocean City, Maryland has no casinos, no legal ones, anyway. Whitewashed concrete, sandstone, and weather-beaten pine staircases adorn the exteriors of over a hundred seedy

motels and cottages, run down seasonal apartments and smaller vacation rental units. So excited was I by these sights, and particularly, the overpowering smell of boardwalk creosote mixed with the pungent Atlantic salt winds, that during family trips the drive from Harrisburg was always downright interminable for me. But when the smell hit me, my first eyeful of the shoreline was never far away; and that would be the true beginning of my rendezvous with the greatest of secret lovers, the ocean. Upon complete submergence in the warm, mildly stagnant smelling east coast waters, the entire world would vanish, regardless of the crowded beach. My parents always screamed themselves hoarse in their attempts to get me closer to shore; but I felt an inner peace, a voice that could not be 'heard' in any normal sense, but which flooded the insides, and nourished the sense of aloneness,



of completeness. For me, leaving the beach has always been a miserable and heartbreaking thing, but especially when I was younger, leaving Ocean City. Every second spent in those waters was tainted with dread, the dread of not being able to stop time, to forget time, to indeed submerge all the way.

The family's preferred route took us through Delaware, a stretch of fifty or seventy miles during which the small car would take in the ripe scent of pig shit from the surrounding fields. This was Mushroom Country, after all, and somewhere out there on that stretch of Delaware highway there was a diner where, my mother assured me, the best fried mushrooms in the world were served.

The four of us: mother, father, brother, me.

Creosote.

Dead algae and prehistoric gases.

Pig shit.

Twenty-five years ago.

When the bus pulls in, I close my disintegrating copy of *The Executioner's Song*, and marvel at the nearly incapacitating wallop of nostalgia and of banality which has risen up and crashed down, at the concentrated, almost other-worldly melancholy I feel to be back here again. It almost appears as though I'm more interested in giving myself over to self pity, or in being willfully disoriented. I'm looking at the other passengers creeping out to the main drag of OC, some crossing the six lane highway, headed directly towards the boardwalk. Another surge of discomfort. It's an effort to start walking. Why am I not running towards the horizon, to the boardwalk, for my cherished first glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean the way I would have if I were seven and this were nineteen eighty three? But I can already see the hint of open sky over water, and the tip of a sand dune or two, a tiny sliver of boardwalk and some boardwalk strollers, still visible between the hotels and motels today, just as it was back then. If my parents were standing next to me today, on the main drag, at noon on a Monday, they would want to go somewhere and sit down. Perhaps they would not expect me to run for the green water in the same way I always had. When I reach the boardwalk, and see the ocean for the first time in two decades, it is with a vague uncertainty, almost with fear, and then weariness. What was I expecting? There it is. The ocean. Hello ocean.

My feet hurt and I want to go sit down somewhere.

It is around midnight when she startles me from my reading: the most beautiful girl I have seen in several hours of wandering the boardwalk, and observing the strolling vacationers from breezy tavern patios. I am in an underground dive bar called Pepper's Tavern, considering the right time to have my historic return to the Atlantic depths. I've been here since seven, and I've been writing fevered juicehead nonsense on napkins. I've been alternating between my juicehead nonsense and surface talk with strangers on either side of me, talking about *Exile on Main Street* and the Sex Pistols, about the tavern and about Ocean City. People are more sociable and more inebriated while on vacation. I'm no exception. When I find myself alone, I return either to scribbling or to the disintegrating book, Norman Mailer's Pulitzer winning tale of Gary Gilmore's blues. The motel built above our heads is the Sea Scape, one of the cheapest boardwalk-side tourist dives in OC. I remember it well. My mother checked us into a room here on at least four or five occasions. We always seemed to get the same room, I think it was number nineteen, on the first floor. My mother would gripe about the squalid rooms, she would gripe about being poor. The Sea Scape was never too shabby for my father, and I much preferred it over the three star places we sometimes stayed in. It wasn't the jaundiced old wino flavor of its economy digs that won me over, I was too young to enjoy that, but the speediness of check-in and check-out, the narrow hallways, the lack of bellhops and serving trays. In a ritzy place like the Holiday Inn, there were a million things to get caught on between your room and the water. The Sea Scape always gave me the thought that it might as well have been built right in the drink. The Sea Scape was a joke to my family; but today, I love it more than ever. Their logo is the same in two thousand seven, and so are the rooms.

The more that I think about it, nothing has changed at all. Except us.

A lot can happen to a family over so much time. Especially a family like mine.

Same logo.

Same rooms.

Same ocean.

In two thousand seven, I have checked in alone, to room number twenty-six.

My bag is stashed in there, with my untouched swim shorts.

When I put them on, it will be different than

before.

My legs were so pudgy as a kid. I had such fat little legs.

And my hair was more than blonde; in the sun it would go dead white.

The girl leans there to my left and stares at me. The barman comes over, she asks for a vodka cranberry. He asks for I.D. When she speaks, turning on the charm because she hasn't got I.D., I hear a soft girlish voice but with a very hard Russian accent. "State law," the man says. "I'm sorry." With that, he's off to the other end of the bar.

But this Russian girl remains in place, and begins her stare once again.

"You can help me?"

"Me? Can I...no, I'm really sorry. I don't have any I.D. either."

"But they serve you drink? Why they do not ask for card?"

"I don't know."

"How old you are?"

"Thirty. Nearly thirty-one, actually."

"Ah! You do not look *theyr-tee!*"

She grows silent. When I look back up, I expect her to be gone, but she isn't. Her short black hair contrasts harshly against her skin, which is as pale as mine. I'd guess her age somewhere between seventeen and twenty-two, but it's hard to tell in the bar lighting. Her complexion is a little spotty round the cheeks, reinforcing my suspicion that she is underage, but a beautiful little thing all the same. She's wearing a raspberry colored mini-skirt and a Mexican-style jacket that only goes halfway to her hips.

"You have girlfriend?"

I nearly choked on my beer. "No, do you have *boyfriend?*"

"I have friend who is a boy, but I do not have *boyfriend.*"

Just then, the bar man returned. "I hate to interrupt man, but she can't stay here without I.D. State law."

"Okay, I go." The girl glared at the large, barrel chested man and then gave me a similar look.

"What is your name?"

"Gene."

"I am Dolly. In room *theyr-tee seeks*, maybe you come?"

Before I could begin stammering, she was gone. Her purse smacked me on the shoulder on her split second exit-whirl.

"Not bad." The barkeep grinned, and shook his head. "Be careful with those Russian girls. She's probably got a boyfriend waiting for you up there with a stun gun, or a taser or some shit."

"You don't think I should go up there?"

"*Fuck* no. What ya want for a shot, s'on the house."

I chuckled at the thought of what had just happened. Of course, I had a hard on, and the booze had suddenly gone to my head. I did my shot, went back to my book, and tried to read. I couldn't. I even wrote the door number on my book, just in case.

Maybe she was a cop. With a body like that, it could only be considered entrapment, no two ways about it. Perhaps she was a highly valuable asset in one of those international live organ smuggling rings. I'd stumble up there with a six pack of Budweiser and a hard on, only to wake up two days later hooked up to an IV in the back of an abandoned Chevy Summit with one or both kidneys removed. No pussy was worth the risk of that, not even this little Slavic siren. And the barkeep had warned me. It was indeed a disapproving expression he wore about ten minutes later, when I called him over to close out my tab and prepare me a take out six of Budweiser.

As I left the bar, I stopped to intentionally lose myself, for a moment, in the womblike warmth and magically full bodied life-force of both my condition, and the wild black beyond out there, both deafening and hypnotic. The boardwalk was dead.

Room thirty-six wasn't hard to find, even though the hallway was dim then, going on 1 A.M. The roar and hiss of the ocean concealed my footsteps as I approached the second door on the left. I found it unlatched, and pushed it open immediately, before my common sense caught up with me and led me back down the three flights of stairs and to the safety of the bar. There, on a king sized bed, before a large open balcony facing the ocean, laid a half dressed and unshaven young man watching television and smoking a cigarette.

The half nude slob looked up, and mumbled, "Mon in."

"I'm sorry," came my response, half shouted due to nerves. "I think I have the wrong room."

"She's in the bathroom."

I entered further, stepping gingerly over to a circular, pressed wood card table directly in front of the bed, and sat down, removing a bottle from my

brown paper sack.

"I'm Bob," said the thuggish Cossack swine. He had black hair buzzed down close to the scalp, and a significant beer paunch. Would he be the one to perform the surgery? No, I quickly decided. Too young, and evidently he had too little respect for personal hygiene to suggest any kind of medical know-how. More than likely, he was the muscle of this cloak and dagger outfit. I stepped over to the bed where he seemed to have been rendered temporarily immobile, and shook his hand. "Gene," I told him, holding the mercenary stare of this Russian "Bob." I sat back down and drank my beer. I could feel the ocean wind on my forearms and tried to focus on the blowing curtains until I learned more of this nocturnal scene. In my own perverted way, I think I was enjoying myself, if only because this thing, this "Ocean-City-homecoming-Russian-organ-thieves-with-names-suspiciously-like-American-sitcom-characters" thing was simply too much to process normally. Then, there was also the twenty or so drinks I was by now radiant with. I could very consciously sense a transformation taking place. The resort town around me was becoming an adult universe, or rather, becoming a part of the *greater* adult universe around it, the real world, with frightening speed. Perhaps I was hastening this with my movements, through boardwalk bars and now in this room, instead of the alternate *modus operandi*, a more traditional day, one in which I simply sat on the beach reading about Gary Gilmore in between vigorous dips in the ocean, perhaps a few pages knocked off in my reporter's notebook, a more civilized attempt to understand what I was doing here. Of course, that's an absurd notion. I'm not wired to behave so delicately. I don't know that I'm wired to really behave at all. I was throwing myself in harm's way, I believe, as a rite of passage. If and when I woke up the next day, there would be no "Ocean City of the mind," no more nineteen eighty-three, or nineteen eighty-six, or nineteen seventy-nine memories. No place of dreams, no swooning over what might have been, out here in my Ocean City of innocent ten year old romantic dreaming, of that Ocean City mystique which was alive and well in my psyche over the years, always susceptible to violent agitation by nearly any sea imagery, particularly the unintentional melancholy of Madonna's "Cherish" video, or the sandy, sun-baked, salt-water doom in the one for Chris Issack's "Wicked Game." Passing mentions of anything I could somehow tie

down to Ocean City, transposed feelings, faces, ideas: all that I had inherited as an unreasonably melancholic child and as a dangerously depressed young man would cease to be valid currency here, after tonight. All the things I had absorbed from the world around me, some of them far too deeply, could no longer be so effortlessly fused with the oceanside torpor. The first glance and the last glance, just another vacation. I never wanted to leave. It was becoming clear now, at one A.M. waiting on a girl in a damp motel room, that a huge part of me never really had. It was time to cut the cord. The booze would help, and so would Bob and Dolly. In the morning, I would have brought these streets, these boardwalk fry stands, these rooms and these waves, all up to date with my face, and my soul.

"You have threesome?" Bob muttered, from his station.

"The three of us? Now?"

"Sure, yes? You want? We can."

"Well, I don't know. I've never done this before, what if I can't get hard?"

"When you see her, *you will be hard.*" The dirty bastard was smiling over there, I could feel it.

The bathroom door opened, and Dolly stepped out, barefoot in a silk see-through nightie. I stood up and placed my left hand down along her right thigh, the other behind her head, and kissed her deeply, with both terror and relief rolling across the surface of my tired and pickled thirty year old skin.

I offered them each a beer from the sack, and stepped out onto the balcony to smoke a cigarette, and think a while. There was nothing to fear in these rooms. Just night people. Nothing to fear down below; just a place where the land meets water.

And Bob was right: I'd never been readier.

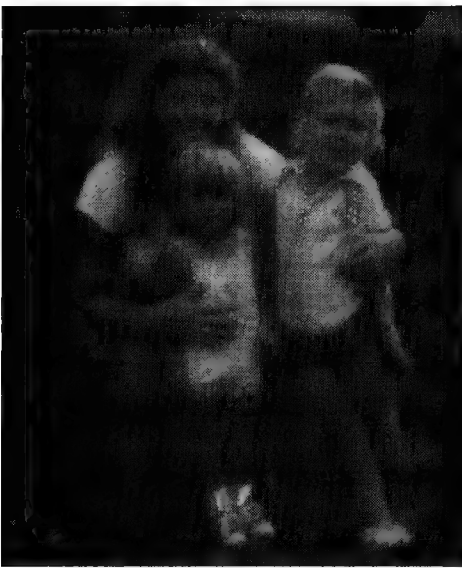
Dolly encouraged us to subjugate and defile her with our collective manhood in ten or fifteen different ways over the next few hours. But every once in a while, she'd try to convince Bob and I to blow each other.

Bob would narrow his eyes and turn to me, and say, "Eh? You want?"

"No....I hope that's alright with you."

Bob would wrinkle his nose up and grin. "Yeh, yeh. I do not like either. She....crazy, you know?"

Neither Bob nor I had any interest in directing the "action" as it were. We simply followed Dolly's instructions. She was clever, and came up with



scenarios in which I could quite potentially lose my balance and fall into the general area of Bob's dick (which, I am pleased to report, was smaller than mine), or another in which Bob's dick would

graze mine during a complicated arrangement, but we kept outsmarting her. Time and time again, Dolly's impish exhortations to begin cavorting in a homosexual manner were met only with grins from her otherwise agreeable and dutiful servicemen.

Mr. and Mrs. Filthy finally sent me off with their motel room's Gideon-placed Bible, after a long bit of sermonizing about the Christian faith. (Dolly: "You are a man who is full of hate. You must not to hate, but to love. You must find favor with man or God will never forgive you.")

When I returned to the bar, it was past closing time but they had forgotten to lock the door. My bartender was cleaning up. "Ah, come on in, what the hell. How'd it go?"

"I had to fuck her with some other fella."

"Ah....that. Yeah, I've been there."

"They were Christians."

"They were what? Christians?"

"Yeah. They gave me this." I held up the Bible.

"Je-ZUS Christ. There's some sick fucks in this world. Go ahead and tell me more about it, and the whiskey's on the house until I'm ready to head out."

Four A.M. found me on the beach, with another carry-out six of Bud, staring up across the boardwalk courtyard of the Sea Scape Motel. With twenty-forty vision, and seeing triple besides, it was impossible to tell if the lone human shape standing on the balcony of the only lit up room on the fourth floor was Bob or Dolly, but I stood and stared back at the shape for some five or ten minutes.

The shape never moved, nor did I. Based on what I could remember of that room's location, while standing in the hall, it looked to be dead center.

Room thirty-six.

Nobody on the road.

Nobody on the beach.

I removed every last stitch of clothing.

I stripped down quickly, fearing police.

I bent down and buried the six pack in the sand, lifting one out for myself as I finished.

I took it with me, into the great beyond: solid black.

And as I drifted out into all that infinite blackness, almost unbearably electrified from the whiskey and the smells and sounds, it became impossible to tell where the sea ended and the sky began, except to keep my head above, and, of course, my drink. This may have been one of H.P. Lovecraft's fever dreams, and there I was, floating around in it like evil incarnate, destined to vanish forever, into the deep, black sea. Yet still, somehow, I could not shake this fundamental trust in my own innocence, the gnawing reminder that I could carve one hell of a hideous path through this life; but the worst crime of all would be no worse than stubborn adherence to a religion that wants me more than I want it.

Dreams of a childhood, of a childhood in:

This place.

My dreams are the most acute symptom of a virus that wants to make sure I suffer.

A strange peacefulness consumed me, and all other thought was voided.

The water was so very, very warm. And so very, very cold.

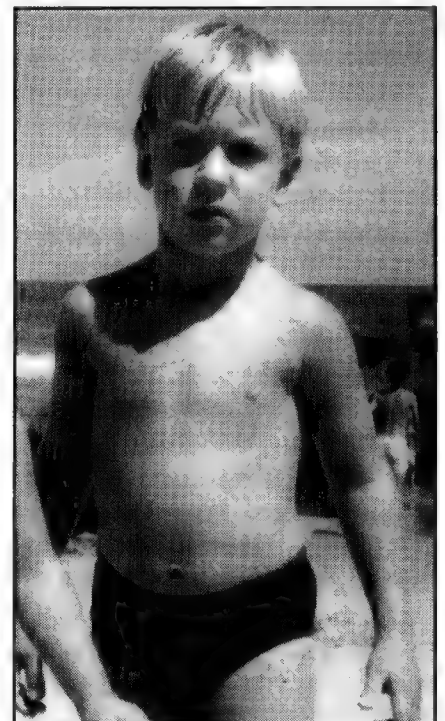
Black on black.

I was getting too far from shore.

My beer was just about drained.

A quarter mile offshore, I hurled the bottle out towards Spain, towards France, towards England, and swam back for another.

Like Cthulhu was lashing at my heels.



The Continuing Saga of Dr. Iguana The Story So Far



The Story So Far!

Lone Clone Phones Home, Now Clone All Alone Home Cloning Phone.

On July 24, 2007 a dream of mine died.

Weekly World News - The World's Only Reliable Newspaper - announced that they were going out of business and I blame myself.

In a household budgetary move, I allowed my subscription c. 2004 - 2006 to run out. Further, I can't recall the last time I bought an issue at a supermarket checkout stand. Oh sure, I marveled at the crazed headlines staring dauntingly from their old-fashioned black and white cover, but I didn't do what really counted - pony up the dough.

For those who dismissed WWN as just another supermarket tabloid - it was published by the same company who put out *National Enquirer*, etc. - let me set you straight. The print equivalent of a Bob & Ray radio program, *Weekly World News* was the funniest dead-pan humor magazine in America.

Consider some of the headlines from the last couple of years or so.

Alien Mummy Goes On Rampage
Trick-or-treaters terrorized by undead E.T.

Little Girl Actually Sings Heart Out!

Elvis Is Alive
And Running For President!

Bush Converts West Wing To 'Arrest Wing'

Seeing Eye Squirrels For Dogs

Alien Bible Found!
They Worship Oprah!

Entire Town Can't Stop Yawning!

Franken-Swine!
Farmer Uses Lightning to Shock Prize Pig
Back To Life



WEEKLY WORLD NEWS

THE WORLD'S ONLY RELIABLE NEWSPAPER www.weeklyworldnews.com

Farewell to
• ED ANGER
• SPYCAT
• DOLLY
• P'LOD

FINAL ISSUE OF WEEKLY WORLD NEWS!

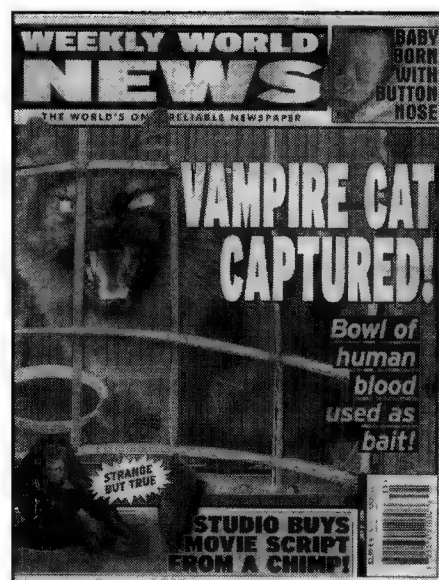
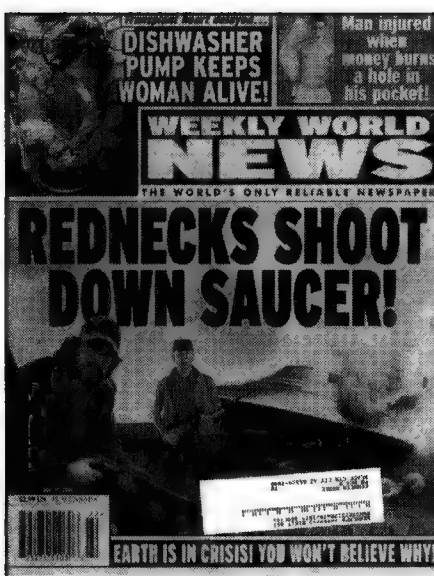
Collector's
Item

- The best from years of cutting edge journalism
- Buy now, sell on eBay tomorrow!

AUGUST 27, 2007

\$2.99 / \$3.95 CANADA





Aliens Return Abducted Pets!

Tragedy!

Kids Can't Find Uncle the Buried In the Sand

Louisiana Purchase was actually a rental...

FRANCE WANTS IT BACK!

WHO SUCKS?

Shocking new reality show for vampires!

If you were to tell me that you ever saw headlines like those beaming out from the near a supermarket check out stand and weren't interested in reading the far-fetched stories, I'd smirk and say, "Sure pal, sure." Since the magazine's late-70's inception, I have overheard literally hundreds of people reading the headlines aloud, laughing, and then watched them grab a copy of the tabloid to read while they waited for their purchases to be rung up.

The tabloid's greatest validation? Tommy Lee Jones, when searching for reliable news about UFOs, grabs *World Weekly News* and several knock-offs at a local newsstand in the 1998 movie *Men in Black*.

There were plenty of tabloids that covered the similar material - modern day dinosaurs, mutants, U.F.O.'s, bizarre conspiracy theories - before *Weekly World News*. However, WWN was the first publication to come right out and say that they were kidding. Indeed, every issue included the following disclaimer.

"*Weekly World News* articles are drawn from different sources and most are fictitious. *Weekly World News* uses invented names in many of its stories, except in cases where public figures are being satirized. Any other use of real names is accidental and coincidental.

The reader should suspend belief for the sake of enjoyment."

("Well sure," says my pal Steglio Cortez, "That's what I do with the *Miami Herald*.")

If the *National Enquirer* had included a similar disclaimer inside their publication, they'd never have to brave another celebrity lawsuit!

At one point, I was so enamored with *Weekly World News* that I wanted to actually quit covering music and write for them. I wasn't the only one. Comedian/boogie pianist extra-ordinaire Rev. Billy C. Wirtz once confided to me, "Man, with all the weird shit I've witnessed first-hand - UFO's, freaks, and wrestling - I think I was born to report for *Weekly World News*." Then, he said that he knew an editorial assistant that might be able to get him on staff. Excited, I asked Wirtz that if he were to get his foot in the door at WWN, would he hold it open for me? "Yeah, man," he answered before interjecting, "But if you steal my story about the three-breasted mutant who gets time and a half for working in strip clubs, I'll never speak to you again."

So, I decided to write the following sample headlines.

Naked Man Spontaneously Grows Clothes!

("Every time I shave, I lose a button!")

I Was a Teenage Mermaid for the F.B.I.!

(J. Edgar Hoover's Fight Against Underwater Communism.)

Belly Button Rings Really Alien Signal Devices!

("Come Impregnate Me You, Probing Beasts," they Broadcast To E.T.'s.)

Bigfoot Shops at Wal-Mart!

(Astounded greeter: "I thought he was just another customer who needed to shave his feet!")

Sexual Invasion From Another Solar System.

(Men are from Mars, Women are from Zartog 9!)

Your House is Trying to Talk to You!

(Cobwebs are really neural connections to your domicile's subconscious mind.)

Ferocious Fairies Fight Flatulence!

(The "little people" have a weak stomach for strong smells.)

Mail-order Mom Mugs Miami Mobster

Shocking Archaeological Find! Extinct Race Discovered!

(40 years ago a scattered tribe called "hippies" existed.)

Dogs Have Celestial Out-of-Body Experiences!

(That's why Fido appears to be fighting in his dreams. He is!)

Prominent Zoologist Claims: Cats Really Evolved From Rodents!

("They were cast out of the feline race because they were interspecies cannibals!")

World's Oldest Baby to Wed World's Youngest Grandma!

Shocking i-Pod Revelation!

(They're Really Aliens Growing Into Your Kid's Brains!)

GPS Guides Car Thief into Police Trap!

("It promised me sex," yells disillusioned carjacker.)

Automatically, you can see what's wrong here. I wrote obvious jokes. WWN tended to twist reality and use deadpan switches on old puns as part of their story philosophy. There was an art and - to be honest - a formula to what they did. Moreover, readers had to actually know something to get the humor expressed between their pages. In the final analysis, that may have been the tabloid's undoing.

Not only had WWN's potential audience grown dumber - unable to understand many of the simpler comedic allusions in the mag - they have gotten meaner. Believe it. If Brittany Spears dies as the result of one of the stupid misadventures that her life is currently based

upon, mainstream media won't just cover it - they'll revel in it. The implicit message being: "See, we built her into a tantalizing soft-porn, teen music slut, then we destroyed her. We didn't leave her with a solitary shred of human dignity. Wasn't that good nasty fun? Now let's see if we can do the same thing to that girl who plays Hannah Montana."

By contrast, *Weekly World News* probably would have laughed off Spears's peccadilloes with a story titled *Bat Boy Caught Wearing Brittany's Lost Panties*. In this day an age, the blood thirsty provocation of human misery is far more saleable than a black & white tabloid spoof.

Further, the *Weekly World News* - created because its parent company needed something to do with their black & white printing facilities when the *National Enquirer* went all color - wasn't exactly designed to be read every week. Case in point. While shopping, I saw an issue that made my daughter and myself laugh out loud. Pleased that we could share a laugh at the wonderfully outrageous "news" stories, I decided to get a subscription so we could laugh together every week. For our trouble we even received a Bat-Boy T-Shirt, which my daughter proudly wore to school. ("You're weird," said her best girlfriend. "Cool," exclaimed the boy who sat next to her in science.)

However, after a few months, the magazine simply wasn't eliciting the same response from us as it had earlier. We had gotten used to it. So, when dwindling cash-flow dictated that we make some tough budgetary cuts, I let my subscription lapse. Less than a year later, WWN announced that they were going to fold, and I feel guilty.

There are no more great humor magazines. (At least not intentionally humorous.) *National Lampoon* folded two decades ago. In an age when the average 12-year-old is too busy with his X-Box to read, *Mad Magazine* can't seem to find its mature voice. Meanwhile, shows like Adult Swim's *Robot Chicken* and *Aqua Teen Hungerforce* have usurped their place as top purveyors of angry - albeit incomprehensible - commercial satire. *The Onion*, is largely a product of the internet. Only the *Funny Times* - really just an outlet for syndicated alternative columns and cartoons that would otherwise run in the *New Times* - is the only humor tabloid left.

Sadly, *Weekly World News* chose not to die as it had lived. The cover of their final issue played it fairly straight, using photos of their most famous characters to say goodbye. Considering that I probably triggered their demise, I'm surprised that they didn't sign-off with a story similar to the following.

Arizona Man Destroys World Weekly News!
(And *Esquire* may be next!)

Utilizing destructive powers far beyond those of mortal men, Ken Burke from Black Canyon City, Arizona single-handedly caused the demise of *America's Only Reliable Newspaper*. Citing budgetary cutbacks, the alleged human allowed his subscription to lapse, throwing the whole economic structure of this award-winning tabloid inexorably out of balance until finally, death came to *World Weekly News*.

Contacted at his so-called home, Burke initially feigned innocence. "It's not my fault! I love *World Weekly News*. I encourage my daughter to wear a Bat Boy T-shirt for crying out loud. I was as shocked as anyone when I read that you guys had to stop publishing."

Plied with false kindness and insincere forgiving words, the heartless automaton posing as a man admitted that he and his "wife" possess a supernatural knack for destroying businesses. "The same thing happens with us and restaurants. If my wife and I discover a restaurant that we like, we'll dine there until we get tired of their menu, or lack of cash-flow dictates that we eat at home for a while. Then suddenly, bam! We drive there one

night and discover the restaurant had closed its doors. By our count, this has happened fourteen times."

Those who believe this to be mere coincidence should pay heed to the devil spawn's shame faced observation. "It's like a weird reverse superpower or something."

Then, as the interview reached a conclusion, Burke made a chilling threat to another one of America's great periodicals. "I've gotten to the point where I'm afraid to cancel my subscription to *Esquire* - a magazine I find increasingly snooty and far too hung up on stuffed shirt fashion for my taste - in fear that it will fold. I just want to stop getting it in my mailbox. I don't necessarily want it to die."

Told of the karmic threat to their venerable publication, the staff of *Esquire* did not immediately return our calls. "They can't come to the phone right now," explained an anonymous member of the janitorial crew. "They're all busy updating their resumes."

(A scaled down version of the *World Weekly News* can still be found online at www.worldweeklynews.com.)

Dans Le Restaurante Mexicano

The badly aging hipster,
sporting the requisite faded Hawaiian shirt
and oversized bermuda shorts,
was getting loud.

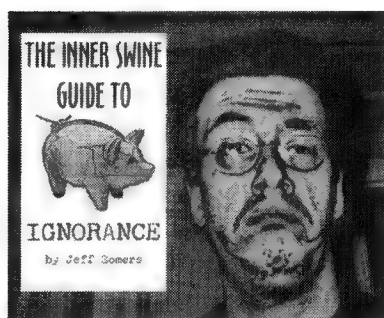
Which didn't make much sense to me,
as his girl was sitting so close
she was almost on the other side of him.

Making a big show of it,
he demanded Patron Silver
(\$50 a bottle)
for his drink.

The bartender poured the premium tequila
into a cracked and dented shaker,
adding a day-glo green mix
from a plastic bottle.

And handed it, across the bar . . .

The guy, took a big big gulp,
turned to his girlfriend and said,
"See? They make the best
margaritas here."

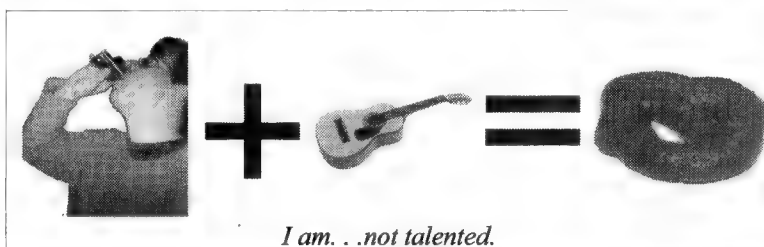


The Inner Swine Guide to Ignorance by Jeff Somers

Episode Five: The Walk of Shame

Friends, like many of you, I once aspired to be a rock star.

This was before I realized how uncommonly dorky I am, of course. Plus the complete lack of musical talent—I mean, Mozart was composing when he was what, six years old? And The Beatles wrote complex, timeless pop songs before they even knew a single thing about formal music training. Me, I could sometimes hum a song well enough for it to be recognized.¹ Sometimes. Most times when I hummed, I wound up receiving the Heimlich maneuver and mouth-to-mouth from a concerned stranger.



Of course, that's what you get when you hum tunelessly in public. Yet another lesson Ignorance has gifted me with.

Still, this didn't seem to be a real deterrent. First of all, electric guitars appeared to me to be magical instruments wherein you simply strummed the strings and *Black Dog* by Led Zeppelin came booming out.² Second of all, most rock stars seem kind of dopey, so I imagined it couldn't possibly be that hard to take three simple chords and write something like *Wild Thing*.³ Sure, maybe something like *Layla* would be a little beyond my thick, peasant fingers, but a couple of chords? Why not? I'm a reasonably intelligent man, with reasonable dexterity.⁴ If I were a more self-confident nerd I'd make some lame role-playing joke here about having a three Dexterity, which most of you wouldn't get, and you'd then ask your nearest nerd friend who'd explain it to you, and then you'd mail m some sort of devastating insult regarding my nerdiness. Damn your eyes.

¹ Unfortunately, no one has ever been able to identify the song I am humming, and it maddens me. Either I am experiencing something akin to what Paul McCartney experienced when he dreamed "Yesterday" and walked around humming it, waiting for someone to tell him he was stealing someone else's song, or I am being beamed alien music from another planet, or this is the theme song of my inner monologue, leaking out. Which is: awkward.

² After initial failures I studied Led Zeppelin footage carefully and decided that a bottle of Jack Daniels was necessary for guitar greatness. . .and the rest is history.

³ When I try to play "Wild Thing," all the animals nearby start wailing.

⁴ I assume my ability to not fall down counts as "dexterity." Which I always misspell "dexterity" for unknown reasons. Thank goodness for spellczechs.

Back in college,⁵ my old roommate donated his cheap starter guitar to me when we moved out of our apartment in order to save him the trouble of dealing with it, and I spent a few months creating my own riffs and chords in a vacuum of any knowledge whatsoever, a sort of Asperger's version of music. In the loneliness of my new apartment I have no idea if any of it resembled music at all, and no record of those compositions survives today, sadly. Perhaps they were the brilliant, haunting music of an alien intelligence, or maybe they were just the atonal janglings of a moron who didn't even know how to tune his instrument. The world will never know, and you're possibly lucky for that—the guitar neck snapped one night without warning or fanfare, a final sour note burping into the air and then fading away.

For years, I forgot all about guitar.

I'm a big believer in what I call Heinleinism, based on the famous quote by Robert Heinlein:

A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects.



In short, I've taken to heart the notion that I should be able to perform a wide range of skills. I don't require that I be particularly good at them, but I think I should at least attempt to learn something more than the basic math and language skills that allow me to live a normal life in the United States—I mean, everything I use at my job I more or less learned in Grammar School (with the exception for the soul-deadening willingness to sell my time in exchange for cash, a skill you generally learn in your twenties after being beaten by life a little). It don't require any fancy thinking.

Of course, I've pretty much failed at everything I've tried since this realization. I tried my hand at computer programming, and while I can write a decent Visual Basic ditty, I have no real grasp of the art. I tried to learn how to really play chess and now have one lazily-memorized opening and some basic strategies in my brain to show for it. I tried to learn French and can now say stuff like, "Good day, my name is Jeff. I must be going to have one glass of beer, please. Now!"⁶ and very little else. Still, I figure someday I'll find myself in the midst of an action-movie disaster and I'll be that character who's a Jack of All Trades, Master of None, whose backstory has been one of failure and humiliation, except in order to survive the disaster, he will need every shred of his half-assed, vague skills! So I keep plodding on. Guitar was next on the list.

Next stop: The Walk of Shame.

⁵ College was also the scene of a memory of mine simply dripping with shame: the time I played air guitar in front of this guy who played in a band and he laughed and pointed and said, "He's not even moving his fingers on the frets!" I didn't know what he meant, but I knew I'd been shamed.

⁶ Note: I can actually say this understandable French. This, in addition to "Help me!" is really all the French I think I will ever need.

The Walk of Shame is a time-honored tradition for Ignorants like Your Humble Correspondent. It starts with a rush of enthusiasm:

ME: I'm going to learn how to play guitar!

YOU: Who are you again? And why are you standing on my table? And MY GOD WHERE ARE YOUR PANTS?⁷

This sometimes, though not always—the pull of The Drink is insidious, and many times my bout of enthusiasm for learning has been sidetracked by a celebratory cordial that has stretched out into a Mexican Holiday of some months—results in a serious attempt by The Ignorant in question to learn the skill mentioned, and since Ignorants are kind of slow-witted, we usually tell everyone in shouting distance of our plans. We brag of our determination and talk fondly of the steps we're taking in order to attain the goal.

Then, naturally, we fail.

Maybe not totally. We might pick up a few things, a couple of tricks, some basic knowledge—and as this reduces our total store of ignorance, it isn't a complete waste of time. But after telling everyone that you're going to play guitar someday soon, when you emerge weeks later dehydrated and sallow; and all you can do is hesitantly pick out *Mary Had a Little Lamb* in a shaky, barely-recognizable rhythm, you get to walk by all your friends and family with head hung in shame, while they all think the same thing: *Why did we think for a second he could pull it off?*

Because, you see, Ignorance is not simply a lack of knowledge. It is the lack of knowledge-acquiring skills. A true Ignorant isn't simply lazy—though we do tend to be lazy, lordy yes—but also incapable. It's what separates us from the Normals, who I define as anyone who understands instinctively how to make minor repairs.

After the Walk of Shame, of course, there's nothing left for it but to drink heavily for a while; thus reducing even further whatever feeble skills and memories you have, and the cycle is complete. After a while you will doubtlessly start to have an urge to learn something new, and the whole horrible thing begins again, leading inexorably to the Walk of Shame. Believe me, I know.

⁷ *There it is: the time-honored pantsless joke. Enjoy!*

Thorns for God's Mary

By David McLean

and we wept thorns while God's Mary still believed,
and gave us the daily teat where at faith drank
a people's living need becoming our hungry unbecoming greed,
and archives and parchment here that carve our critical palimpsest
where the breast of god's mother spread unresting love before us,
just another Isis questing for her castrate's cock,
and our hearts remain unlocked,
the subtle lid i close on all that lies
all that your eyes disclose.
like time.

Interview With

Bunny Ranch

By Dom Salemi



Poster: Brian Horrorwitz

The ads don't promise or say much: organ-driven garage rock from Portugal. You hit the tiny club, and yes, there is indeed an organ player fueling things; yet there is so much more going on. This madman is testifying; he doesn't know the Vox is there for color, a little comedy, some rhythmic accompaniment. He's telling you

how it is: letting the strains of his keyboards gently wash over you like a cool breeze so you may unknowingly get down with it; then rudely demanding your attention with a thunderous chord that has you on your feet getting not only down, but funky, and very, very loose.

And who is that man singing and treating the drums like an afterthought? He's stomping and shuffling all about the stage, intentionally stressing the wrong syllables, while idiomatically declaiming, "Never on my watch, Never on my face." It's all being played up; his vaudeville show is necessary because he's competing with the Vox and it's demented stylings.

The bass player is unconcerned. He's in a groove. Keeping it together in a manner of speaking. With such terrifically funky lines to play. He's putting it down and not too worried about whether the center holds.

Immaterial, as the guitarist is propping it all up. The melody is what he's all about. That and decorative flourishes - some bluesy licks here, a bit of fuzz and tremolo there. And when the rhythm is on the verge of totally breaking down; there he is, keeping the beat while all about him are seemingly losing their's and the audience in danger of getting off the good foot.

Madness, anarchy, strange beauty and the overwhelming question: Why is all of this going on in a nondescript suburb on Maryland? I caught up with the band after the show to ask them this and other silly questions.

Brutarian: Tell us how and why the band came together.

Bunny Ranch: Me (Carlos) and André started to jam together. Then they found a crazy bass player, fresh and new in town, just back from London where he had been living for some time. I'm talking about Pedro, and João Cardoso is our second keyboard player he joined the band in 2006. Why we did it: we love rock 'n' roll.

Brutarian: You know that when you guys become huge stars, you're going to get sued over your name, don't you? That famous brothel in Vegas ain't gonna be too happy about you using their name.

BR: They already know who we are. We asked



Courtesy of Bunny Ranch

for permission to use this name and the public relations man by that time said that they were very happy about that!

Brutarian: Didn't know Portugal had a huge rock and roll scene, tell us something about it, please.

BR: We don't have a huge rock 'n' roll scene in Portugal. We do have some bands doing nice stuff. We'll get you some records and you can judge for yourself.

Brutarian: The citizens of the USA lack geographical knowledge, hell, let's just make that knowledge in general. Most of them think Portugal is part of Spain! Tell our readers what makes Portugal unique, and how its rock scene differs from Spain's or even France's or England's.

BR: Portugal, ah, it's just a beautiful country, and in so many ways. Where do you begin, you know? In Portugal, some bands are different from

bands from another countries, and yet, many are little more than carbon copies of groups from other countries. As far as rock 'n' roll is concerned, we're not that exotic!



Courtesy of Bunny Ranch

Brutarian: Your English, all the band's English, is quite impressive. Do you write your lyrics in Portuguese and then translate to English? Or just in English? And growing up, were there any English rock bands whose lyrics impressed you? Or was it all about the sound?

BR: That's a couple of questions as one question! Just kidding! We write our lyrics in English, and, of course, bands like the Cramps, the Stooges and the Stones were a big influence. Still, we like to think we are inspired by everything in life: women, love, hate, lies, movies ...

Brutarian: Here in the states, you play what we call "garage rock." Are you familiar with the term, and how would you define it? Who are some of your "garage rock" influences, if any, and why?

BR: We're just are a rock 'n' roll band. We don't see or approach our sound as if it was straight garage rock. We are just influenced by bands from the first psychedelic era. You know, the Nugget's stuff, the Brittish invasion. And there's the songs we've heard from Pebbles, the Back from the Grave anthologies. It's all here, but we love other types of music. Garage, it's broad, people want to narrow it.

Brutarian: So when you're trying to pick up girls overseas, do you tell them you plan to move to the USA, or England, or do you just try to hide the fact that you are from Portugal?

BR: Hey Dom, you know we are proud of being Portuguese. You are invited to join us for a week and find out all about Portugal.

Brutarian: The Bush administration has been really clamping down on tours by rock bands as foreign rock bands tend to be anti-administration - and rightly so, since Bush is a fascist brute. How did all the boys manage to get their visas?

BR: It was easy to get the visas; but you have to enter the United States under a fake name. We were the Twist Connection and we were visiting just to record and do some tourism.

Brutarian: One critic has described the new sound of Bunny Ranch as r&b, soul and Gospel fed with Stax, and carbohydrates. Would you agree, or disagree, and why?

BR: We agree with the description except for gospel. We don't hear that and, in any case, that's a sound that's really unique, really special.

Brutarian: OK, each member of the band had one question about the United States that they wanted answered. If you give me those four questions again and I'll try to answer them and put them into the interview.

BR: Was 9/11 a result of a conspiracy?

Brutarian: George Bush can't even spell "conspiracy." We here at Brutarian love a good conspiracy but, alas, we have to assign it all to incompetence.

BR: How do you get to be a big band in the States?

Brutarian: There are no big bands in the States. There is Britney Spears, Beyonce, Justin Timberlake and a bunch of small bands.

BR: Why did you re-elect George Bush?

Brutarian: He was never elected. The Supreme Court illegally made him President the first go round, and voter fraud in Ohio and tampering with the voting machines got him in the second time.

BR: Are you ever going to leave Iraq?

Brutarian: Yes, when we invade Iran.

“Mr. Everybody’s Movin’”

The Glen Glenn Interview

By Ken Burke

Glen Glenn is one of rockabilly music’s best-loved elder statesmen. Although the California-based cult hero never enjoyed the slightest rumbling of a hit single, the recordings he and guitarist Gary Lambert made for the Era label during the mid-1950’s are regarded as the pinnacle of West Coast rockabilly. Indeed,

modern day aficionados dig “Everybody’s Movin’” and “One Cup of Coffee and a Cigarette” with the same fervor that earlier cats revered Elvis Presley’s Sun sides.

Born Orin Glen Troutman October 24, 1934, the singer-songwriter moved with his family to San Dimas, California when he was thirteen-years-old.



Growing up in the same working class environment that stirred Eddie Cochran's musical melting pot, he heard such West Coast country icons as the Maddox Brothers and Rose and his early mentor Wynn Stewart. Today, modern writers call that the beginning of the Bakersfield sound, but Glenn is quick to point out, "There wasn't any Bakersfield sound. Bakersfield was just a small run down place where not many singers ever worked. They should call it the California sound, because that's what it really was."

After meeting up with Gary Lambert, young Glen Troutman hoped to follow his cousin Porter Wagoner into the country music business. However, when rock'n'roll via Elvis Presley first began provoking the girls to hysteria, the youngsters jumped in with both feet. That said, Glenn was no mere Presley-wannabe. Brimming with cool cat vigor that subtly masked lascivious intentions or an impending broken heart, his best records showcased a depth of feeling most rockabilly bandwagon types never truly mastered. Moreover, his chemistry with Lambert resulted in a completely unique sonic statement.

Billed as Glen Trout, then Glen Glenn, he and Lambert enjoyed some local success on Era Records, but nothing national. Before his fledgling career - and a possible hit record - were stopped cold by his induction into the U.S. Army, the young rocker cut quite a swath through the local scene, touring on package shows with Johnny Cash and the Maddox Brothers and Rose - later singing in a band fronted by bass-slappin' Fred Maddox - and appearing on such local television shows as *Town Hall Party* and *Cal's Corral*. Everywhere the youngster went, he took his camera and had his pictures taken with some of the greatest country and rockabilly stars of the era - including the biggest of them all, Elvis Presley. (More on that later.) Post-Army, the singer-songwriter embraced the same sort of pop-rock sounds for the Dore label that Presley himself embraced at RCA, but no hits were forthcoming. Subsequently, Glenn packed it in and took a day job as rockabilly went underground for a couple of decades.

Glenn's work can best be appreciated on two superior Bear Family compilations. *Glen Rocks* and *Dim Lights, Thick Smoke, and Loud, Loud Music*. *Rocks* brilliantly mixes rockabilly classics ala "Everybody's Movin'" and "One Cup of Coffee and a Cigarette" along with the effervescent "Blue Jeans and A Boy's Shirt," with bluesy country

stompers "Would Ya" and "I Didn't Have the Sense to Go." Smarter than the vast majority of rockabilly veterans prowling the scene today, Glenn not only owns his master tapes - which he has leased out - but has kept possession of his many demo sessions with Lambert from early in his career. As a result, we are treated to stirring rehearsal renditions of Mac Curtis's "If I Had Me a Woman" Wayne Raney's "Jack and Jill Boogie" and Presley's "Baby Let's Play House."

More of Glenn's demos and rare TV audio performances from the hallowed '50's enliven *Dim Lights, Thick Smoke, and Loud Loud Music*. Although hampered by scratchy sound quality, the early small combo country sides exhibit undeniable charm. Whether wailing traditional heartache ("A Hundred Years From Now," "It Rains Rain") or bouncing through uptempo barroom paeans ("Dim Lights, Thick Smoke, and Loud Loud Music," "Alone With You," "Company's Comin'," "Hey Ma, Hey Pa."), Glenn displays the emotional range of a powerhouse country singer.

Most revealing are Glenn's renditions of several Presley cover tunes recorded live on the *Ozark Jubilee* and *Cal's Corral* TV shows. A few performances sound flat-out country ("Shake, Rattle, and Roll," "Mean Woman Blues") but on some tunes Glenn and Lambert's own spirited style firmly take hold ("Blue Suede Shoes," "I Got a Woman") and compete favorably with the rock king's originals.

Sought out by English rockabilly fanatics, Glenn recorded a new album for Ace Records in 1982, but saw no profit in continuing to record. One of the Rockabilly Hall of Fame's first inductees (1997), he occasionally toys with the idea of making a country album. Now retired from his day-job, he seems content to take on a few high profile gigs each year, meeting old friends and making new fans along the way. Indeed, his commanding, jovial presence has earned him a growing international audience despite formidable competition. "I've witnessed the magic of Glen Glenn," exclaims our mutual friend, entertainer Johnny Vallis. "We've been on shows together where performers who once had very big national hits didn't capture the audience's attention the way Glen did."

This writer first heard Glenn's "One Cup of Coffee and a Cigarette" on the 1977 compilation *Hollywood Rock and Roll* (Ace Records). Instantly enthralled, I made it part of my personal repertoire, performing it in a simplified Jimmy Reed style



because no guitarist of my acquaintance could replicate Gary Lambert's eloquent twang. Over two decades later, the aforementioned Johnny Vallis put me in touch with the rockabilly master when I was researching *The Blue Moon Boys - The Story of Elvis Presley's Band* (Chicago Review Press, 2006).

For that book, not only did Glenn openly tell stories about his experiences with Elvis Presley and the king's bass player Bill Black, he saved our ass when it came to supplying photos. My co-writer on the project, Scotty Moore and DJ Fontana's former producer/road manager Dan Griffin, had so thoroughly alienated his former charges that the duo blackballed us with the powers-that-be at Graceland. As a result, we were short on contractually obligated pictures for our book. Despite being a friend of Fontana's, Glenn generously offered up permission to use all the

pictures he had of Presley, Moore, Black, and Fontana, free of charge. ("What good are pictures if nobody sees them" he asked rhetorically.) Moreover, he put me in touch with people like Kitty Maddox and Billy Strange, who brought added perspective to the story. Gratefully, I say this to the world: Glen Glenn came through for me when it counted the most, so I cannot be impartial - I love the guy.

The following interview is a distillation of several conversations from 2005 - 2007. Honest, articulate, and remarkably knowledgeable, Glenn told me about his life, career, friendships, and the superstars who have paid tribute to him ala Bob Dylan and Robert Plant. I had a blast speaking with this legendary artist.

BQ: You got your first exposure on the Ozark Jubilee TV show. [The country music series ran

intermittently on ABC from 1955 - 1960.]

GG: Yes, I worked with Porter Wagoner. In fact, my new CD [*Dim Lights, Thick Smoke, and Loud Loud Music*] has some stuff I did on the *Ozark Jubilee*. That CD is mostly country and a lot of live and stuff from the *Ozark Jubilee* and *Cal's Corral* out here in California on a television show we did in 1954 called the *Country Barndance* and stuff like that.

BQ: Tell us how you first got interested in music.

GG: I lived in Joplin, Missouri, about seventy miles from Springfield, that's where the Jubilee was. I always love that country music. Every Saturday night I listened to the *Grand Ole Opry* and all the Opry stars like Roy Acuff, Red Foley, and that was before Hank Williams was ever on there. Hank didn't go on there until 1949. But what really got me influenced and country music was also KPOO in Tulsa, Okla. I would come home for lunch every day from school so I could hear Bob Wills. He broadcast live during my lunch hour, so I'd come home and listen to Tommy Duncan and Bob Wills. So, that's all I wanted to do was music. When we moved to California in 1948, I was thirteen, then I got interested in the artists out here, you know. I think Cliffie Stone had the *Hometown Jamboree* and I started watching that. Spade Cooley was out here, Tex Williams was out here. The *Town Hall Party* came a little bit later.

BQ: So, you liked the stuff with a bit of swing in it?

GG: Well, I also liked the slow tear jerking songs too, like Hank, George, Merle, or Porter Wagoner. I sang a lot of up-tempo songs even though it wasn't rockabilly, it was hillbilly. If you get my Bear Family CD called *Glen Rocks*, you'll hear my version of "That's All Right Mama." I cut that in January of 1955. It never came out and I didn't know Elvis. But, I did it hillbilly style. I sang it like Gene O'Quin would have sung it. I hadn't even heard of Elvis Presley at that time. I was singing a lot of the hillbilly type country and a lot of ballads that I cut in late '54 and '55.

BQ: Take us back a bit. When did you get your first guitar?

GG: My first guitar was a little bitty old cheap Gibson. I taught myself, I didn't have money to go to studios or anything. I'm not a great guitar player but I can play pretty good rhythm. You know, Gary Lambert played with me all the time. We went to high school together. When we were fourteen-years-old, Gary was playing like Merle Travis. (Laughs.) I think he played better than he does now. He was like Larry Collins, he never had a lesson was just a natural born guitar player. Some guys are like that. So, we played together. We played the Squeakin' Deacon amateur show. It was

at the Riverside Rancho, that's where Tex Williams had his Friday and Saturday night shows, on Riverside Drive in Los Angeles right next to Griffith Park. Squeaking Deacon, he was pretty big out here. He was probably the biggest disc jockey on the West Coast. He had a daily radio show on KXLA out of Pasadena. That's was the first station that Tennessee Ernie Ford was on - well he did a show in San Bernardino first - but then he went to KXLA. - he was a morning disc jockey there. Deacon was a comical disc jockey. If you wanted see Squeakin' Deacon, rent the movie *Giant*, and the scene at the end where James Dean is drunk, the Deacon is the emcee at the big party. He talked like a hillbilly and he was probably the biggest disc jockey in L.A. for many years. Every Sunday he would have an amateur show and during the first hour he'd bring over the stars of the West Coast as guests. He'd have maybe Tex Williams, Cliffie Stone, Joe Maphis, or a Merle Travis. During the second hour, there was an amateur show. Gary and me said, "Let's go down there and get on the Squeakin' Deacon amateur show." So, we went down there and we won it! I got a watch. I can't remember what kind it was, but I wish I had kept that watch. It was the first time I was ever on radio. I said, "Man, I won the amateur show!" So, me and Gary started playing around a little square dances and stuff. I would say that we were on the amateur show around 1952 or 1953. So, I was actually moving around before Elvis started singing. Then, we just kept hopping around. We used to go to *Town Hall Party*. We knew most of the guys, we'd go backstage and visit with everybody.

BQ: What was the backstage atmosphere like at Town Hall Party?

GG: Well, it's not like today. Today it's hard to get backstage anywhere. They didn't have any security. I'd just go backstage. I knew Joe Maphis and Merle Travis. Gary really knew Merle Travis because he played his style and Merle sort of liked him, he was just a young kid. So, we got to know all them - Tennessee Ernie Ford, Gene O'Quin, Billy Strange. In California at about that time, you have a lot of music out here. Spade Cooley was down on the pier of Santa Monica with his big show every Saturday night. Then you had the *Hometown Jamboree*, they were down in El Monte. Then you had the *Town Hall Party* in Compton. Tex Williams was out at the Riverside Rancho. They weren't clubs, they were big dance halls and you could take kids in there. If somebody wanted drink or beer or something, they had to go off to the side where they have the bars, but couldn't take into the big dance halls. And, they all had televisions. Television started around 7:00 and ended at 1:00 at night. We only had about five channels. So,

everybody was watching all this good country music out here.

BQ: Generally, most people think of Nashville and Texas as great country music areas. But Chris Hillman told me that California was a true country music Mecca.

GG: Oh, it was! In fact, Cliffie Stone was the guy who started Capitol Records. He was the first A&R man for Capitol Records and they were the biggest label there was for country music. Cliffie Stone was a big producer out here and he used to work for Stuart Hamblin. They go back as far as Nashville. Stuart Hamblin was playing music in the late 30's in the Maddox Brothers and Rose. Cliffie Stone used to be the bass player in Stuart Hamblin's band. Jack Guthrie also came from out here he wrote the "Oklahoma Hills" and "Oakie Boogie." He worked out here on the West Coast as well.

BQ: At the same time you were hearing all this country music, there was also a thriving West Coast rhythm-and-blues scene. Were you like a lot of teenagers of the era who dug both kinds of music?

GG: Yes I did. And also pop.

BQ: Who were some of the R&B and pop acts that you liked during that time?

GG: Well, Hank Ballard, who was the good friend of mine who has passed away, when he had "Annie Had a Baby" and "Work With Me Annie." But the thing is, the black artists weren't played on the regular stations at the same time as Tony Bennett or some of those other pop artists. They played them at midnight until six in the morning. You have to turn on the rhythm-and-blues and black programs at that time. I heard Huggie Boy and all those disc jockeys but basically Ken, my main music was country. That's my favorite music, even more than rockabilly. Rockabilly is what pays me my money now. I'm a country singer. I wanted to be like Porter. I wanted to be Porter Wagoner. Porter didn't want me to do rock-and-roll because he hated rock-and-roll. Porter would say, "Why are you doing that rock-and-roll? You should stay country." But he would let me sing on the show. In fact, on the *Ozark Jubilee*, I sang "Shake, Rattle, and Roll." I think that's on the *Glen Rocks CD*, that's a live one from the *Ozark Jubilee*. Porter would let me do a rock song, not very many.

BQ: Are you indeed related to Porter Wagoner?

GG: We're cousins through marriage. Both of his sisters are married to my uncles. My name is Troutman on my dad's side and my mother's name is Hall and they lived down in West Plains Missouri. So two of Porter's sisters are married to my uncles, and I've known Porter all through the years. Porter has done a lot for me. I worked for him and I was his front man. He always

introduced me as his cousin. I'm the only one in the family that sings besides Porter.

BQ: What can you tell us about Porter Wagoner and those early days before he made it?

GG: He cut about forty-five records on RCA Victor and none of them were really hits. They had already given him notice that they were going to drop him and I think he'd cut one last session and he didn't even cut that in the studio. He went to the KWTO studios where he did his daily radio shows in Springfield Missouri and cut that song "A Satisfied Mind." That became the record of the year in country music. Porter is strictly a country boy. Porter Wagoner is probably one of the greatest talking country artists - other than Hank Williams when he did those Luke the Drifter albums, I'd say Porter was the best. Porter is a natural emcee. He's the first guy in country music to take country music to television with his Porter Wagoner show. That was way before *Hee Haw*. He's not nuts about pop music and that was one of the things that caused the fallout between him and Dolly Parton. You see, Porter had Dolly's contract for several years. He discovered Dolly but Dolly wanted to better herself. In order to better herself she had to go on to the pop music field and Porter hated pop music. So, they had a lot of arguments on that and Dolly broke her contract and started doing her own stuff. Porter had produced all of her country albums. They made about six or seven duet LPs together on RCA Victor. Then, when she went on her own, Porter sued her. So, they had a settlement and he got several million out of it but that's not what he was after. He wanted Dolly to stay a country singer. I can understand Dolly's position. She wouldn't have become the famous Dolly Parton if she hadn't done like Glen Campbell did and crossed over to the pop field. Porter understands that now. They are friends now. [Porter Wagoner died in 2007 - KB.] They went for about ten years where they didn't even talk to each other. I'll tell you the truth, that was Porter's doing more than Dolly's. She would have always talked to him.

BQ: When I was a kid, I laughed at Porter Wagoner's rhinestone suits. Now I think they're kind of cool.

GG: Well, Porter got that idea from me. This is a true story. I was out here working in California and the Maddox Brothers and Rose started those types of uniforms. The guys in Nashville wearing those cheap little cowboy outfits and the Maddox's came out there with those rhinestones and fancy outfits. Well, I worked with them so I had those outfits too. I've still got them. If you come visit me in California, I'll show them to you. I went back to visit Porter on the *Ozark Jubilee* and I put on one of those suits. I was his guest. Porter

comes over to me and says, "You can't wear that suit." I said, "What do you mean I can't wear this suit? It's better than the one you're wearing." He said, "That's the idea. I'm Porter Wagoner and *you've* got the fancy outfit on." Then he asked, "Where'd you get that suit?" I said, "Nudie!" "Nudie? Who's Nudie?" (Laughs.) I had to tell him who Nudie was. So, he made me take off the uniform and little old cowboy outfit when I was on the Jubilee. He wouldn't let me wear it. Well, the next trip, he came to California and says, "Where's Nudie?" He was down there on Lancashire Boulevard. So he went down there and Porter bought suits for him and his whole band the Wagonmasters.

BQ: Where did you get the idea to wear rhinestone suits?

GG: Maddox Brothers and Rose. The Maddox Brothers, when they were on the *Louisiana Hayride*, they called them "The World's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band." They out dressed everybody. Most guys wore old pair of cowboy boots and a cheap western shirt. But here come the Maddox Brothers with their tailor-made suits with the embroidered flowers on it and the rhinestones. So Elvis, when he met Fred Maddox he asked if he could wear Fred's jacket. Fred took his jacket off and he wouldn't let Elvis wear it on stage but he let him put it on. Fred said that all night at the Hayride Elvis wore his jacket and said, "Well, I going to get me a suit like that." He wasn't even big then - that's when he was on Sun. Another thing, all those suits were bellbottoms like uniforms in the Navy. Well, if you notice the costumes that Elvis wore in Vegas, they were patterned after the Maddox Brothers with the bellbottoms. Also, when he had the gold suit, he had that made because of the Maddox Brothers. The Maddox Brothers and Rose were one of the biggest acts on the Hayride. They were headliners like Webb Pierce, Faron Young.

BQ: They were a great live act, weren't they?

GG: They were the best. I remember when Ray Price came out here. He had big hits out like "Heartaches by the Numbers," "Crazy Arms," all those hits. I did a little tour with Ray and we followed the Maddox Brothers. And they had done the same tour we were doing along the west coast about a week before. Every place we went a promoter would come over and say, "Ray, you didn't do too good." "What you mean I didn't do too good? We had a good crowd." He said, "Last week, the Maddox Brothers and Rose out-drew you. They did a lot more than you did." Ray was big then and he told me, "There's nobody on the West Coast who can out draw the Maddox Brothers and Rose." Johnny Cash said the same thing when he came out here. He said, "Those Maddox Brothers can

just close the West Coast." Oh yeah, you couldn't close a show that the Maddox Brothers were playing on the West Coast in those days. Because they put on a *show*. Ray Price is my singer, I love him. But he just stands there and sings. So does Jim Reeves. So does Webb Pierce. The Maddox's got up and put on a show. They danced around, Don and Henry were telling jokes on one another. Rose was a heck of a showman. They were the only artists in country music that put on a show in those days. The rest of 'em, you'd have to like because of their singing. Porter is a good showman. He's quite a talker and an emcee and he gets out there and works the crowd. Most of 'em don't. Faron Young was a good showman. I worked with all great country guys because I got to work with Porter.

BQ: Tell us about your experiences with the late Faron Young.

GG: I was in the army from '58 to '60 at the Schofield barracks in Hawaii. Well, Faron comes over to do a show in Honolulu and I'm going to meet him at the airport. He was quite the ladies man and when he got off the plane he had lipstick all over his face. The stewardesses were all kissing him. I said, "Faron, you're loaded with lipstick." He said, "Yeah, them stewardesses done fell in love with me." The first thing he said after that was, "Glen, where's the bar?" So, the first place we went after we got to Honolulu was the hotel bar. Faron did about two or three shows over there and I asked him if he'd like me to show him around the islands while he was there. He said, "I don't want to go nowhere. I just want to stay here and drink." So, Faron called the liquor store and had them deliver liquor to the hotel by the case. He was having parties right there in the hotel. Georgie Riddle was in the army with me too. Georgie Riddle was the front man for George Jones, Don Gibson, and he also worked for Bill Carlisle of the Carlisles for about fifteen years. He was on the *Grand Ole Opry*. Then Bill died and he left Nashville and moved up to Indiana. But Faron was a funny guy, he told jokes and he was a great showman. He laughed all the time, danced around a little bit.

BQ: Faron Young got many listeners ready to hear rockabilly.

GG: So did Marty Robbins. Marty did a lot of rockabilly songs. They had to. Porter and Ernest Tubb, they could never do rockabilly. I couldn't see Ernest Tubb singing, "You ain't nuthin' but a hound dog, just crying all the time." (Laughs.) There were very few country singers that could sing rockabilly, but Faron could and so could Marty. He could sing Hawaiian, anything. But when Elvis came out in '56, he destroyed country music, pop music - everybody's music. So, if you didn't get on



his bandwagon, you could sell no records. The ones like Porter, he just hated Elvis at that time. Not personally, because he knew Elvis. Elvis was on a lot of Porter's shows. Porter was always the headliner. Elvis traveled with a lot of the country acts. He was a smaller star and he did a lot of shows with the Maddox Brothers and Rose. What happened was that Elvis was so good that all the kids in the south started knowing about him and they'd all come to the show. Then, even with a star like Hank Snow, they started booing because they wanted to see Elvis. That's why they moved him to the closing part of the show.

BQ: Give me an idea of how the crowd responded to you and Gary Lambert back then. When you were a country act did you heat it up with a little boogie?

GG: Oh, I did boogie. I didn't just do the slow

songs. I did the fast hillbilly songs. I cut the fast songs like "Jack & Jill Boogie." Gary just tore the heck out of the guitar. We didn't call it rockabilly, we called it hillbilly.

BQ: When did you first hear the word rockabilly?

GG: I never heard the word rockabilly even when I was cutting my records

"Everybody's Movin'" and "One Cup of Coffee." I think that came around later. I don't think Sonny Burgess or Billy Lee Riley ever heard the words rockabilly either. I don't know who came up with that word. When I grew up, the music on the *Billboard* charts was always pop music, r&b, and country. They had three categories and there was no such thing as rockabilly. I don't think I ever saw a write-up in the old days where they called Elvis a rockabilly. They used to call him the hillbilly cat, but never rockabilly. Rockabilly now is so big. People don't realize that now it's like bluegrass - it's all over the world.

BQ: Tell me about your rockabilly style.

GG: Well, if you listen to my rockabilly, I don't sound like anybody else. I don't sound like Sonny or Billy. They've got that southern Memphis feel. I've got a completely different sound on my rockabilly than theirs. In California, there weren't too many of us out here, just

me, Eddie Cochran, and the Collins Kids.

BQ: I take it you ran across Eddie Cochran now and then?

GG: Constantly.

BQ: Was he younger than you?

GG: Yes he was. He was about three years younger. That's the reason he wasn't in the service when I went in. Eddie was only twenty-one when he got killed.

BQ: Was he a nice guy?

GG: Oh yeah. Eddie had a lot of talent. He was a great guitar player. Just think that's what he would've done had he lived a lot longer. Well, he influenced the Beatles. I was older than Eddie and he started out playing with Hank Cochran as the Cochran Brothers. They weren't brothers. Well, I was playing a lot in California and Eddie would come to every show I did

and sometimes I'd let Eddie come up and sing songs and him and Hank would come up and sing. Ritchie Valens was following me because he was coming out too. His mother would bring him. I was always good about bringing them up on stage and letting them sing. So, I knew Eddie real well and as



you know, Connie "Guybo" Smith, the bass player who worked on all of Eddie's records was also on all of my records. Connie's still living by the way. I knew Eddie real good, but '59 to '60, I didn't see Eddie. I was in the army and that's when Eddie was really going on those tours. "Summertime Blues" and all those things had already come out. When I got out of the army, I didn't see much of Eddie. He was always on the road and he went over there to London and got killed. But I know the family. On my webpage there's a picture of Eddie's mother - Mrs. Cochran - and Bob Denton. That was Eddie's best buddy. Everywhere you saw Eddie, you saw Bob Denton. He was a good little singer too. We used to have a yearly party for Eddie. We'd have like a backyard barbeque and have all of Eddie's relative over. Just a little tribute for Eddie. The Collins Kids, Larry and Lorrie, I know them.

BQ: Did Hank and Eddie [The Cochran

Brothers] make the transformation to country roughly the same time you did?

GG: Just about the same time. Because of Elvis. We've got to give Elvis credit. I think we all did it because of Elvis. Eddie wanted to be Elvis. I wanted to be Elvis. Everybody wanted to be Elvis. The thing is, Hank Cochran never liked rock'n'roll. That's why they split up. Because they were doing more country and Hank was doing most of the lead singing. Eddie would sing with him and play the guitar. When Hank left, he went down to Nashville and wrote all those big songs. He wrote one of my songs on my CD called "Goofin' Around," with the Ernie Freeman Band. Then Eddie went on to be a good little session musician. He played on Skeets McDonald's records, Wynn Stewart's, and that was country. Eddie wanted to be like my guitar player Gary Lambert. They were good buddies. Guitar players hang out together, so Eddie was hanging out with Gary more than me. He was with me, but he was always talking to Gary because they were trying to learn their different licks. They wanted to be Joe Maphis, Merle Travis, or Chet Atkins.

BQ: You recorded nearly two dozen tunes before you released your first disc on Era.

GG: I did.

BQ: You were recording at KXLA radio?

GG: Yes. That's the station where Tennessee Ernie Ford started out. I recorded right in the studio where Cliffie Stone did his daily *Hometown Jamboree Show* from 11:30 to 12:30. I knew all the disc jockeys down there and it didn't cost me a dime. I went down there late at night when nobody was there and me and Gary cut a lot of stuff down there. But we couldn't sell it because it wasn't really rockabilly. It was hillbilly boogie. When the music changed, they didn't want me to do hillbilly, they wanted me to do strictly rockabilly.

BQ: In addition to the fine compilations that Bear Family has put out on you, there is a collection on ACE titled *Everybody's Movin'* and the *Glen Glenn Story*.

GG: Yeah, that's got all the early stuff and the second part - *Everybody's Movin'*, we cut in the 80s. "Everybody's Movin' Again" is the answer to "Everybody's Movin'," which says that after all these years, everybody's *still* moving. But that didn't sell as good. All these people that play our kind of music - and I play with the same band, Gary Lambert, Guybo Smith - I cut with the same band that I did during the '50's. Of course, the studio sounds different, but Ace Records is happy with it. But the original disc, *The Glen Glenn Story* is still selling. They're still selling it on vinyl. But just like the Everly Brothers or Jerry Lee Lewis, the fans

want all the original stuff. So, that's the reason I decided I didn't want to do another rockabilly record. Billy Lee Riley does so many rockabilly and blues records that ain't selling and isn't on a major label. Let's put it this way. Bear Family would not be interested in doing a new set. They want all the old stuff. Ace Records is the same way. But I am going to get a steel guitar and cut a country album like Ray Price did. It may not sell many records, but I can't compete against my old rockabilly stuff with new rockabilly.

BQ: How did Era records approach you?

GG: Well, the first record I cut that I tried to sell was "Kathleen." The other side was "One Cup of Coffee." So, I took it to every label in Hollywood in those days. I took it to Imperial, I took it to Mac Wiseman at Dot Records - I knew Mac because he hung out with Fred Maddox all the time. Mac, all he likes is bluegrass, so he didn't like "One Cup of Coffee" at all. But he liked "Kathleen." He said, "You've got to have another song. I don't like that 'One Cup of Coffee' thing. In fact, I don't like that kind of music." (Laughs.) So, I couldn't sell it. Then, I gave "Kathleen" to Imperial. Johnny & Dorsey Burnette were there all the time because they were writing songs for Ricky Nelson. Jimmy Haskell, was their A&R man, he fell in love with "Kathleen." I thought, "Man, I'm going to be on Imperial Records." In those days, you didn't have tapes, all you could get were acetates. You'd make a whole bunch of acetates and leave 'em at the record companies so they could hear 'em. Well, it went on for about two weeks and I never heard nothin' from Jimmy Haskell and so I finally called. "I want my dub back. It cost me three dollars and I need it." He said, "We lost your dub." Well, they didn't lose it. Sharon Sheeley had written a song for Ricky called "Poor Little Fool," so when they went into the studio, Johnny & Dorsey fell in love with "Kathleen." So, they went in and helped on the arrangement. They took the arrangement from "Kathleen" and put it on "Poor Little Fool." So, Ricky was actually playing a bit of my song. He even put the "uh-huh" in like I did. "Poor Little Fool" sold something like five million records and Ricky came over to Hawaii when I was in the service and the first thing he said was, "Glen, I'm sorry I took your song. But I didn't do it." I said, "Who did it? Who did it?" He said, "It wasn't me. It was Johnny & Dorsey Burnette." I knew that was my song. Sort of like how Dave Alvin did with "Everybody's Movin'" when he did the movie *Cry Baby*. I saw Dave and he said, "I owe you some money, don't I?" I said, "Yeah, you took my song and put it in a movie." He said, "Yeah, I did." But he never did pay me anything. But that was my first cut. I had also taken it to ERA Records and they did want the rockabilly style and

they didn't want "Kathleen." So they said, "We like 'One Cup of Coffee.' Can you get more stuff like that?" That's when I went back in the studio and did "Everybody's Movin'," "Blue Jeans and a Boy's Shirt" and then I did "One Cup of Coffee" again.

BQ: Who was running Era at that time?

GG: The owners were Lou Biddell and Herb Newman.

BQ: Did they seem to have a great taste for this type of music, or were they just trying to cash in the rock craze?

GG: Well, Lou sort of liked what I did. They started out with "Wayward Wind" with Gogi Grant [#1 for eight weeks, 1956]. They had those types of songs, but when Elvis came out, they sort of wanted a rockabilly guy on their label. I think that's the reason they really wanted me. There were a lot of little labels. I could have been on Crest like Eddie Cochran was but I was thinkin', "I don't want to be on Crest. They don't sell any records." You couldn't find 'em in record stores, they were just a little bitty label. So, I said, "I want a label that I know can sell records." I knew that "Wayward Wind" sold a million records and I said, "That's got to be a good label, man. Look at how many records they sold." That's why I tried Imperial, because of all the records they sold on Ricky. I was on Era before Dorsey Burnette did "(There Was a) Tall Oak Tree" (#23 pop, 1960) or Donnie Brooks when he had "Mission Bell" (#7 pop, 1960).

BQ: Did you get a chance to hear any of your records on the air?

GG: Oh yeah. "Laurie Ann" was actually a pick hit of the week on *American Bandstand*, but I couldn't go to Philadelphia because I was in the Army. I got a telegram from Dick Clark. I could have done the *Saturday Night Show*, but the Army wouldn't let me loose, and I could only play Army shows. I was in special services and during a competition I came in second to an opera singer. If I had come in first, I would have been on the Ed Sullivan show. I was in for two years. The Army hurt a lot careers. It would have hurt Elvis, but he was Elvis. But being in Army just destroyed my career. "Laurie Ann" was big enough - it was on a lot of charts - and Dick Clark played it all week on his show. But by the time I got out of the Army, rockabilly was gone. I came out of the Army and thought, "How am I going to finish my career if Carl Perkins can't even get a job?"

BQ: You switched from Era records to Dore.

GG: I'll tell you how that worked out. Lou Biddell and Herb Newman, who started Era Records, were cousins, and they had many hits. For some reason they didn't get along too well. I didn't know the whole story, but Lou left there and started Dore and Herb kept Era

records. When they were figuring out who got what, Lou said, "I want to have Glen Glenn." So he took me to Dore. Well, their first big hit was with Phil Spector's first group the Teddy Bears "To Know Him is To Love Him" [#1 pop, 1958]. Phil Spector was working for Lou as a runner. He went and got songs and did things for Lou. Jan & Dean's first million-selling record "Baby Talk" [#10 pop, 1959]. was on Lou's label. So, Lou had many big records on Dore and Era was still selling lots of records because they had "Mr. Custer" by Larry Verne [#1 pop, 1960]. So I went with Lou and Herb kept Donnie Brooke, Dorsey Burnette, and Lou had a lot of comical hits. Jim Backus had a LP out. Hudson and Landry sold a lot of records for Dore. So, Lou was doing so well with comedy that he stopped making music records.

BQ: Did you make your last record for Dore in '64?

GG: Yeah, I think the last one was "I Didn't Have the Sense to Go" and "I'll Never Stop Loving You." Which were good ballads. At that time I didn't think that rockabilly would ever sell again.

BQ: Were the Beatles a factor?

GG: Oh yeah. The Beatles were big right about the time I did my session in '64. That was cut with Carol Kaye on bass - she played on more hit records than anybody. Jerry Cole - he was the bandleader for *Shindig* and the music director for the *Sonny & Cher Show* - he played guitar on that. They didn't want me to use Gary because they wanted to change my style. When I went to Dore, Lou said, "Rockabilly ain't around anymore. We're going to put you with a big band." They put me with Ernie Freeman, who was a great bandleader with Plas Johnson. I told Lou, "That's not my style of music." He said, "That's the best band in L.A. - Ernie Freeman's having hits and he's playing behind everybody - Sinatra, Dean Martin. He's going to be doing your next session." He did do a heck of a job, but it just wasn't Glen Glenn. I'm country and here I was singing with an all black band, but it sounds good. In fact, my wife thinks that's one of my best records. (Laughs.)

BQ: Did you cut live in the studio?

GG: Yes we did. You had to. Everything I have is monaural. I didn't have any stereo recordings until I cut the new one in the '80's. That's the reason I have so many tracks. In those days you had cut until you got the right version. So, I've got so many alternate takes.

BQ: Did you have much input regarding your early studio work?

GG: Everything I've ever done in the music business is me, until I cut with the Ernie Freeman Band. Then Ernie Freeman did everything. I usually went into a

studio doing it the way I wanted to do it. Me and Gary would work out we were going to do and it was always my band. I knew how we were going to sound once we got in the studio because we rehearsed it. Goldstar studio - that's where everybody cut in those days, Sonny & Cher, Glen Campbell - the studio time was fifteen dollars-an-hour. That was a lot of money to me. So, I knew I could only be in there about two hours - thirty dollars worth. So, we had our songs down when we went in there and we knew exactly what we were going to do, because we couldn't afford to just keep cutting and cutting.

BQ: As far as recording in those days was concerned, what was good about it and what was bad about it?

GG: Well, I enjoyed recording in those days better than I did when we cut the new album. Because we had to do some overdubs on it and I didn't like that. You lose the feeling when you do that sometimes. I enjoyed the old days better and when I cut my country session, I'm going to do it live. I can't sing to pre-recorded tracks too good. I'm used to singing with a band right there with me. I want to look at 'em and I want them to feel my singing.

BQ: During your early days in music, you knew some of the greats, like Johnny Cash?

GG: Oh yes, I was on Johnny's first tour of the West Coast. I picked him up at the airport - me and Gary Lambert. Fred Maddox booked him out here. Fred let us borrow his big Cadillac. Johnny came in late at night. Luther and Marshall were driving out to California and Johnny flew in. So Fred said, "You boys go and pick Johnny up. He'll be in at two in the morning." So we did. He was sort of tired and sleepy and he sat in the back seat. He did talk to us quite a bit but I could tell that he was real tired. We brought him right out to Pomona, which is next door to where I live, and Fred - being as cheap as he was - got him a little old cheap motel room. So, we took Johnny to the motel, opened the door, and Johnny gets out. He stands there and looks at the motel and says, "I'm not going to stay here." I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to wake Fred up, he'd murder me. So, I took it on my own to drive him to a big hotel downtown. The next morning I called Fred and he asked, "Well, did you go get Johnny?" I said, "I got him, Fred." "Well, is he over there at the motel?" I said, "No, I took him downtown to the big hotel and you've got to pay the bill." Man, he just blew his stack. "What do you mean you took him to the big hotel?" "Johnny wouldn't stay in that cheap little motel. Johnny said, 'There's all kinds of bugs in this room.'" Then we did the tour of the West coast with the Collins Kids. I wasn't Glen Glenn then.

My name was Glen Troutman, but I cut off the "man." I thought that Trout sounded shorter. So it was Glen Trout with the Collins Kids, Larry & Lorrie, and we did a whole tour with Johnny. I knew Johnny. Then he came to Hawaii when I was in the Army and played Honolulu.

BQ: Let's talk about how you met Scotty Moore, D.J. Fontana, and Bill Black. Who were you closest to out of that group?

GG: Bill Black.

BQ: How did you guys first hook up?

GG: Well, Elvis played the Hayride. So did the Maddox Brothers and Rose. Well, the Maddox Brothers and Rose lived out here in California six months out of the year. Then they went back and lived in Shreveport six months out of the year, and booked all over the south from there, but they actually lived in California. Well, I did a lot of stuff with Fred Maddox. He'd always play this show, the *Country Barndance*. Fred always liked me and he kept telling me about this young kid who they were playing a lot in the south, he said, "His name is Elvis Presley." I said, "Elvis Presley? He'll never make it." Now, everybody in the world knows it, but if you were around back then, you'd think: "What a name." I said, "Fred, he ought to change his name because he'll never make it with a name like Elvis Presley." Fred tried to describe him to me because I was used to seeing the country guys. "Well, he comes on stage and starts shaking his legs and the girls go wild!" I couldn't quite picture what that was about so I said, "Well, I don't think I'd like to see that guy. He sounds like he's a weirdo." Well, he had been telling me about this many times, but they didn't play his Sun Records out here anywhere. I did order 'em and it took me about three weeks to get his Sun Records and when I heard him, I liked him - because I knew he was different. I didn't think he was country, but I thought, "Man, he's *good*." So Elvis went on the Dorsey show. Man, I watched every one of those. The first time I actually saw him on the Dorsey show I thought, "Man, I *like* that guy!" So, they booked him out here for the Milton Berle show down in San Diego. Elvis had never been to California, so they brought him out for the *Milton Berle Show* and also the screen test for Hal Wallis. So, they booked him at the San Diego arena for two nights. Fred Maddox told me and Gary Lambert, "If you guys come down to San Diego, I'll introduce you to Elvis." I said, "I gotta meet that guy." We used to go to the San Diego arena to see a lot of the Opry package shows that didn't come through L.A. - it's about two hours away from where I was. So, we knew exactly where it was. So, all the way down there we kept saying, "Well, we're going to see Elvis Presley, but that's a big auditorium. You have to be a Slim Whitman or a Webb

Pierce to pack that place.” I said, “Gee, it probably won’t be full because Elvis has just got the one record.” But we went down there and that place was completely packed! Mostly women. So, we went inside the auditorium, and we were way in the back. We began looking around for Fred Maddox. He was standing by a guard at the door that goes backstage. So, we went down there Fred said, “Come on back, I’ll introduce you to Elvis.” I said, “No, let me see the show. I want to see him. Then, I’ll come back and see him. Can you tell the guard to let us in?” So, he told the guard to remember us. We went back out because we wanted to see the show.

BQ: How was the show?

GG: Well, Elvis came on and man he just tore ‘em up! That’s the best I’ve ever seen him. His clothes were so wet and everything that it looked like he jumped in a swimming pool. He just went wild. D.J. [Fontana] had just started playing a solo on the drums and Elvis was standing there shaking for about ten minutes. I said, “I’ve never seen anything like this guy in my life.” After he got done, the girls surrounded the building. You couldn’t get him out of the building and the police could not get him out. And after the show it took Gary and I about half an hour to get down there because we had to get through all the people. When we got backstage, there was Elvis. I had a camera and I took all kinds of pictures. The first pictures taken of Elvis in California were from me. D.J. knows that because he’s in one of them. I took a bunch of pictures and I talked to Elvis. He was real friendly. Mostly, I talked to him about the country guys because he had not played with a lot of the other guys. He had been playing with Faron Young and we talked about Tom Tall because he had just done this tour with Tom about a month or two before with the Browns. I asked, “Do you know Tom Tall?” He said, “Yeah, I know Tom Tall. I just did a tour with him and the Browns.” So, we talked about this and that. He was pretty nervous and it took about two hours to get him out of San Diego arena. The Shore Patrol had to come and get him out. The second night, I guess he’d learned his lesson, because as soon as he finished that second show, he was out the door and he was gone. Then the next week he did that screen test. But I saw Elvis many times after that at the Knickerbocker Hotel and that’s how I got to knowin’ Bill Black.

BQ: What can you tell us about Bill?

GG: Bill Black idolized Fred Maddox. Fred slapped the bass and he was playing fifteen years before Bill ever knew there was a bass. Bill just idolized him. So, that’s how he got to know me. Bill was closer to my age, although he was a little bit older than me. He couldn’t hang out with Fred all the time because he was married and had the kids. So, he started hanging out with me.

Bill went on a tour with us - he wanted to go with me and the Maddox’s when we were playing Bakersfield and Fresno along the coast. He traveled with us and we’d bring him up on stage. Bill was my buddy and he tried to get me on records too. When Bill quit Elvis, his first idea was to start a group with me as the singer called the Continentals, and do some shows, But I couldn’t do it because I went in the Army. If I hadn’t gone in the Army, I would have probably been playing with Bill. The next thing I knew, he went back to Memphis and started the Bill Black Combo. The last time I talked with Bill - well, I didn’t even talk to Bill. I was already in the Army in basic training and my dad called and said, “Bill Black called me last night. He said he wanted to talk to you but I told him you were drafted into the Army.” Bill said, “I’ve got a record contract for him.” I was already with Era but Bill was determined to get me on records. But he told me dad, “I’m leaving to go back to Memphis. Tell Glen I’ll see him later.” But I never saw him again.

BQ: When you hung out with the band members, what were their distinct personalities like? Who was the boisterous one?

GG: Bill and D.J., Scotty never did talk much. They were doing the movies all the time when I knew them. I don’t think Scotty cared too much for those movies. D.J. didn’t like ‘em all that much, but Bill hated it.

BQ: When you saw the guys together, who was the leader?

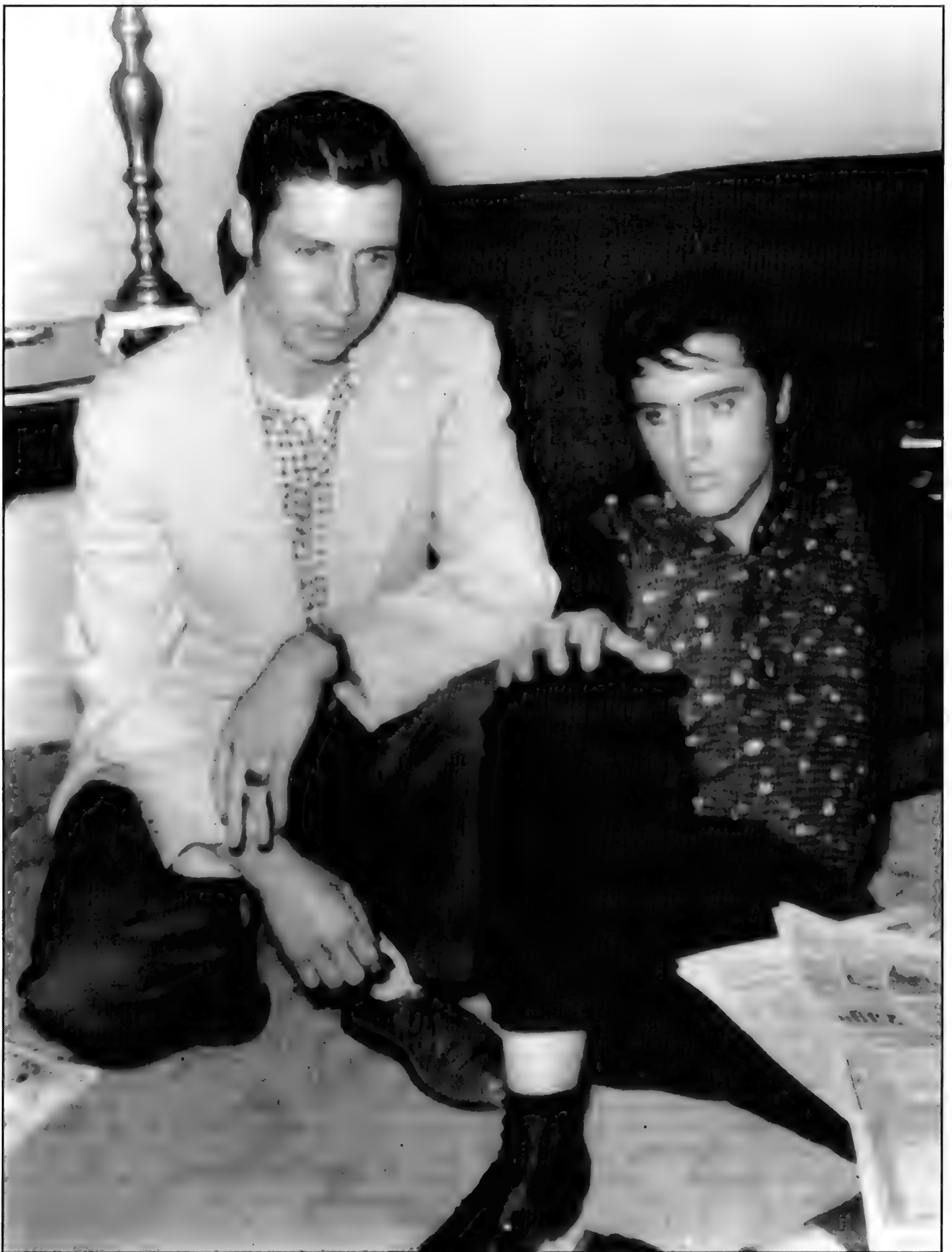
GG: I don’t know if they really had a leader.

BQ: If Scotty said, “Its time to go,” would they all snap to attention?

GG: Bill would never snap to attention. (Laughs.) I would say that Bill did most of everything. I’ll tell you a story about Bill. The only reason I got in to see Elvis when I went up there, was because of Bill. Gene Smith, that was the one who was Elvis’ cousin, if I had went up and knocked on the door, he would’ve said, “Elvis ain’t in. What are *you* doing here anyway?” Elvis always had the whole top floor of the Knickerbocker Hotel and Scotty, Bill, and D.J. had just a regular hotel room together two or three stories down. I never saw D.J. around much, he always had women back then. He wasn’t married then. But we would have little jam sessions.

BQ: What did you play?

GG: It was mostly Scotty and Gary Lambert playing guitar. Bill didn’t have his bass up there. Me and Bill would just sit up there and listen to Scotty and Gary jamming. Once in a while I’d sing a song. I wouldn’t be singing Elvis songs in front of them guys - I’d feel funny about that. While Elvis was making those movies, I was on a television show called *Cal’s Corral*. That was



on for three hours every Sunday afternoon. Well, Elvis used to watch that show because he wasn't at the studio on Sunday. I did all country except I'd always throw in a rock song. Mostly an Elvis song. Elvis would say, "I like the way you're doing my songs. I appreciate that." But every time I went up there, Bill would be the guy who would take me up to see Elvis. Bill was a little bit bitter at the time. I think Scotty was bitter too but he wouldn't say anything. Bill didn't give a shit what he said. He was very bitter about the situation and the money problems between them. So, he didn't even want to go up in the room where Elvis was. So, he would knock on the door, then when Gene would come to the door he'd say, "Glen wants to see Elvis." Then, I'd walk in and Bill would go back down.

BQ: So, he would never hang out with the guys from Memphis?

GG: All the times I went up there, he never hung out with the mob Elvis had with him.

BQ: Was Red or Sonny West with him at that time?

GG: No, I don't think they were with him yet. That's before he got the real big Memphis Mafia. He had Gene and a few other people. I think Red West was in the Army then.

BQ: How did Bill interact with Col. Tom Parker, did you know?

GG: If Parker was around - he was an asshole sometimes - nobody could get in to see Elvis. Even though Bill was not happy with Elvis Presley, he did this for me. He took me up there. He knew that I wanted to see Elvis. One time he called up to see if Elvis was in and they said, "Yeah, he's in. But nobody can see him tonight, Bill. Parker's here." Well, Bill got upset. He said, "I'm going to go up there and I'm going to bang the door down. What do they mean I can't go up there?" I had to stop Bill from taking me up there. He was mad. He was going to bang the door down and say, "What do you mean I can't come in here?" Bill was really upset, man. And, Bill was the kind of guy who could do something, you know. I think he could take care of himself pretty well.

BQ: Did you feel that Bill was angrier with Elvis than Parker?

GG: He was. Say I'm Glen Glenn and I do that to Gary Lambert and I've got a manager. Don't you think that for as long as Gary played for me that I couldn't step in there and say "No! Hold off a minute. You're just my manager"? I think Elvis could have done something. Elvis didn't even buy them a car. He bought perfect strangers nice new cars, but never Scotty, Bill, or D.J. You knew that Scotty and Bill quit Elvis, right?

BQ: Yes.

GG: D.J. didn't quit him because he was on salary.

But the salary wasn't enough for Scotty and Bill. See, when they first started - say they got \$500. Elvis would split with them. He would take \$250 and the other \$250 would go to Scotty and Bill. That's the agreement they had. But once they got Parker, that agreement was gone. So, Bill told me he was making more money before "Heartbreak Hotel" hit. After that, he started getting a salary. I think it was \$200 a week when he was on the road and in Hollywood and \$100 a week when they were just sitting around doing nothin'. Of course he got paid a little for doing the movies too. Here Elvis was making a million dollars and they were making \$200. In those days, it was expensive to call home. Bill liked to call his wife. See, now I've got a phone where I can talk to you forever and it only costs a monthly fee. I remember when I was in Honolulu, I only called home once because it cost me \$40 to talk to my mom for about four minutes. Phone calls were expensive in those days, especially when Bill called to Memphis. I was there many times when Bill would try to call the wife and check on the kids and he would always gripe, "Here I'm working for Elvis Presley and I don't even have enough money to even call my wife." I think Bill had a good reason to be bitter, and he never brought Parker into it, he always mentioned Elvis.

BQ: So, he felt like his friend and partner had betrayed him, not the big-shot manager?

GG: You want to know what I think about it? You don't have to publish it because everybody who likes Elvis might start hating me, but Elvis did not treat them right. I would have never done that to Gary Lambert. But he needed 'em, right? So, they quit Elvis. Then during that last tour that Elvis did where he went up the Pacific Coast - the last gig he did before he went into the Army was the Pan Pacific. He did two shows there. Although he had access to all those great musicians in Nashville, he had never played with 'em. We know that Grady Martin and Hank Garland would eventually play on a lot of great Elvis records, but at that time, Elvis had not played with those guys. The only thing he knew was how to play with Scotty, Bill, and D.J. and he was scared to do that last tour. So, he made Parker call them and see if they'd do the last tour with him before he went in the Army. They did and they got big money. Bill said, "Now we're making big money. We're getting it now." I don't know what they were getting, but it was better than \$200. When they drove out, Bill had Elvis's credit card so he could buy gas, food, or anything he needed for the trip. Bill kept showing me that credit card. He said, "Glen, look what I got. I've got the credit card."

I'm going to buy any damned thing I want." (Laughs.) I remember him saying, "He owes me. I'm going to buy anything I want." He actually had it in his wallet. So, I didn't see him in Portland or Vancouver. I didn't see him until he actually got down here to Los Angeles to play the Pan Pacific Auditorium. When Elvis and his crew came in, they stayed at the Beverly-Wilshire Hotel in Beverly hills. Scotty, Bill, and D.J. said, "We don't want to stay there, we want to stay at the Knickerbocker." So, I was down there visiting at the Knickerbocker and the night before we went to the Pan-Pacific, I was in the room with Bill and Scotty and I followed them down there. The first night, the *Los Angeles Times* and the police department said he was too dirty on stage and they were going to film him the second night. He just tore the people up though. The girls went crazy and you couldn't even hear him sing, because they didn't have the monitors and sound systems like they do today. All you could hear was scream, scream, scream. The next morning, Gary Lambert and I went to the Knickerbocker and Johnny Cash was in town. I don't know where Johnny was playing at that time, but he always stayed at the Knickerbocker when he was in town. We had breakfast that morning and the Jordinaires came down, Scotty, and Bill Black. I don't know if D.J. came down or not. Then, Luther Perkins and Marshall Grant came down. We all had breakfast together in the cafeteria of the Knickerbocker. I had the *Los Angeles Times* and so we were reading how they were going to film his show and the police were going to be there, and if he did "one bad move" they were going to arrest him. All kinds of stuff and we were just laughing. When the Bill came in, Bill paid for me and Gary's breakfast. He said, "No, no, I'll get Glen's." Anyway, the second night at the Pan-Pacific, the police did film the show and all Elvis did was wiggle his finger. (Laughs.) That's a true story.

BQ: How did Bill and the other guys feel about the screaming girls at the time?

GG: I don't know. Bill never got into that. Bill never talked to me a lot about Elvis. Same with D.J. Well, Elvis always had comedians come out and I felt sorry for them. They booed him all the way through. "Boo. Boo. Boo! We want Elvis." That's the reason nobody would work with Elvis. They had juggler's, comedians, accordion acts, and I think they had a girl singer. But when he came on they just started screaming and you couldn't hardly hear him sing. I was at a concert years later at the Forum in L.A. and Elvis got on stage - Glen Campbell was hot then, that's when he was having all those hits - and he said, "Well, you've got the Beatles, you've got Glen Campbell, but let me tell you something. Look at all the gold records I've got. I've

got more than anyone of them." Elvis said that right on stage. He was jealous. But after the Army, we never saw Elvis in person again. None of us. Not Tommy Sands, Johnny Cash - and he loved Johnny Cash. Carl Perkins took his son to see Elvis when he played in Memphis. He sat in the balcony. He never saw Elvis. Can you believe that? D.J. and Scotty never saw Elvis after his 1968 comeback. He lived nine more years and they didn't see him in person. Scotty didn't go to the funeral. D.J. did. D.J. told me the story about when Bill died. D.J. and Scotty went out to Graceland and they didn't go inside. Elvis came down out in the front to talk to them. Even the Memphis Mafia guys were standing around then, but Elvis told them to get away. He said that Elvis was really sad when they told him that Bill had died. Elvis told 'em, "I can't go to the funeral because I didn't want to cause a ruckus or anything. But I'll go see Bill's wife personally." D.J. told me that he did, Elvis went and saw her a week or two later.

BQ: Was there a point in your career when you decided to do other things than music?

GG: Well, when I got out of the service, I couldn't get gigs like I had before. Then I got married in '61. I was playing the Palomino - that was one of the biggest clubs in L.A. - everybody played there. Marty Robbins, Johnny Cash, everybody. I was playing there. Then one day I thought, "Here I'm married and I have a baby on the way." Well, Ken, there's only one way to go in the music business: either you're rich or you ain't got nothin'. Buck Owens had nothin', but now he's rich. [Buck Owens died in 2006 - KB] But how many guys had nothin', but they weren't Buck Owens. There's a lot of talent out there. I've always said that there are people as good as Marty Robbins out there but they just haven't been discovered. Even if you can sing that good, it doesn't mean you're going to have hit records. So, I decided, "I just can't keep doing this. I'm not going to have any retirement." Take Gene Vincent. Gene Vincent was living in Hollywood and they wouldn't even book him at the Palomino. So Gene was having a hard time. That's why Gene started going to Europe all the time, because they liked him over there. I said, "I don't want to be like that." So, I got me a day job. I went out to a place called Geno-Dynamics, we built the Stinger missiles, the Atlas missiles, the one that got to the moon. I went out there thinking they wouldn't hire me because I've never done that stuff before. I just went out and put an application in because I knew I wasn't going to make any money playing music. But they hired me, they said, "We're going to put you on nights." Then I went home and told the wife, "I don't think I'll take this job. I don't want to work nights." Then she said, "No, you got to take

it. If you don't like it, then you can quit it." I took it and I didn't like it. I was on nights for about a month. Every week I was going to quit then they finally put me on days and put me in the parts department. I didn't have to work hard, so I was there for thirty years. I got a retirement from them that I get every month. I quit playing completely. Gary Lambert would play on the weekends and I'd go out and see him once in a while. Until 1977, I forgot about music. That's when *Hollywood Rock'n'Roll* came out and the rockabilly scene started coming back and then I started getting all the people wanting to send me over to Europe, so I started playing again. But I still didn't quit my job until about twelve years ago, when I retired. Since then, that's all I did was play music. I've been to Europe about fifteen to twenty times. I play all the time now. I make good money on record sales now.

BQ: What was your first response when somebody told you there was an audience for your old songs? Were you surprised?

GG: Yeah, I was. See, *Hollywood Rock'n'Roll* was one of the first revival albums. I think Buddy Knox had gone over there before '77 and did some tours with Dave Travis. Charlie Gracie had gone over, but very few others. So, when it came out, I didn't even know it came out. A friend told me, "I went to a record store and saw an album with you on it." Then different people started getting a hold of me. For about five years, things were kind of slow. The main thing about this rockabilly revival, Ken, is that it's all about young people. When I played Spain, me and my wife were the oldest ones in the crowd. ninety per-cent of the festivals we play is filled with young kids. The first time I played in Sweden was with Rose Maddox in 1987. And I went back to Sweden about fifteen years later and these young kids came up to me and say, "My mom and dad saw you." Now their kids are coming to see us. So, rockabilly - it'll never be mainstream like the music of today - it will always grow and be there.

BQ: Did you play a lot of gigs with Rose Maddox?

GG: I was close to Rose. Rose played all my shows and we worked together the last five years of her life. I took Rose to Europe many times. Rose was my buddy. After the Maddox's split up, me and Fred still played together for a long time. Just me and Fred. When I went to Rose's funeral, Johnny Cash and June Carter sent the biggest flowers, man. Dolly Parton sent flowers. Merle Haggard would have been there, but he was on a tour. Merle went and saw her just before she died.

BQ: You've gotten quite a lot of attention from some very big modern mainstream stars. What has that been like?

GG: I like it. (Laughs.) I mean, how do you think I felt when I played London and Robert Plant and

Jimmy Page wanted to come back and visit with me? The only reason I knew who they were was because my son loved Led Zepplin. The first thing I told Robert Plant was, "You know Robert, I hate to tell you this, but I'm not really in to heavy metal. My son loves you guys but I'm not into it." Robert Plant said, "I'm not either. I love rockabilly." (Laughs.) How do you think I felt when Bob Dylan wanted me to play for him? I didn't ask to play for him. He got a hold of *me*. You know how he got a hold of me? I played the Palomino and I sold the place out. They had a rockabilly show there. Dylan's manager



Jeff Kramer called up the Palomino and said, "How can we get a hold of Glen Glenn?" The lady at the Palomino said, "I don't know how you can get in touch with Glen Glenn, but Steve Warner was the one who booked him if you want to call him." Well, Jeff Kramer called up Steve Warner and said, "I have a very well-known client," - he didn't tell him it was Bob Dylan - "and he really wants to meet Glen Glenn." Steve said, "Well, I'll get a hold of Glen and we can set up something." So, Steve called and said, "There's a guy who's got a client who's supposed to be well-known that wants to meet you." I knew who it was right then. You know why? Because I knew Dylan was singing "Everybody's Movin'." [Dylan's version of

"Everybody's Movin'" can be heard on a few bootlegged concerts from the late '80's through early '90's - KB.] I told Steve right there, "It's got to be Bob Dylan." So, he called him back and said, "Glen said he would like to meet your well-known client." Then Jeff Kramer said, "I've got a better proposition for you. My client wants Glen to open the show for him." Then he said, "My client is Bob Dylan."

BQ: What was that experience like?

GG: I was scared to death because here I was, playing rockabilly on a Bob Dylan show? I thought they'd boo me off the damn stage. But you know, we got a standing ovation. After we did our last song, we had to go back and do another one. I couldn't believe it. I asked the rockabillys that came to show, "Well, how'd you like Bob Dylan?" They said, "We hate Bob Dylan! We didn't stay. After you got off we left!" "You didn't stay?" "No, we can't stand Bob Dylan." They don't like him but I always make a point of saying, "Wait a minute! You're cutting him down but Bob Dylan likes rockabilly." I think what's helping the rockabilly scene come back is some of the hard rockers. Even Tom Petty came backstage when I played the House of Blues.

BQ: With all the compilations that include your songs, do you ever receive royalty checks?

GG: No.

BQ: So, the only money you actually make is from where?

GG: Ace Records and Bear Family. There's a CD out by James Dean on Cleopatra. "Everybody's Movin'" is on there. It's supposed to include all the songs James Dean would have liked had he lived, and I'm glad to be on there, but how do I know if James Dean would have liked "Everybody's Movin'"? (Laughs.) That CD is all the records stores wherever I go and it's sold a lot, but they've never paid me. I have never got one penny from them. I'm on about forty different compilations and I've never got a dime from them. There's one called *Lost Gold*, they put a lot of my songs out and I never got a dime. If I got lawyer, it would cost me more money to sue them than I would have made. A lot of us guys don't get paid. You see, my contract with Ace and Bear Family is right with them and they pay me good royalties. The check comes right here.

BQ: How do you feel about the reaction your music gets today?

GG: I can't believe that when I went over to Spain, that they had five or six thousand people and when I did "One Cup of Coffee" and "Everybody's Movin'," they were singing along just like I was Elvis. They had people from every country were singing louder than I was. Then, when I got off-stage, they had guards taking

me to the autograph table where I signed for two and a half hours. Afterwards, they couldn't get me out of the building, people still wanted to grab me. (Laughs.) I don't think I was that good. I don't think Elvis thought that he was that good.

Check out Glen Glenn's MySpace page at www.myspace.com/glenglenn.

Our thanks to Johnny Vallis and the inimitable Glen Glenn for supplying pictures.

I AM OLDER THAN I WAS, KATE

By David McLean

"I am older than I was" is a platitude for a poem
when the trees have left London's pavements
naked gray again, and so much more beautiful
their plain and lovable concrete suffering
love's burden of beatitudes
fools have written there, that specific soporific

the only lonely birthing from these words
unheard,
just discourse discrete and spiraled through a
private world,
unfurling love's beastly banners over the
brutal night sky
where a naked star forgot her father's right to
life
and never asked god why.

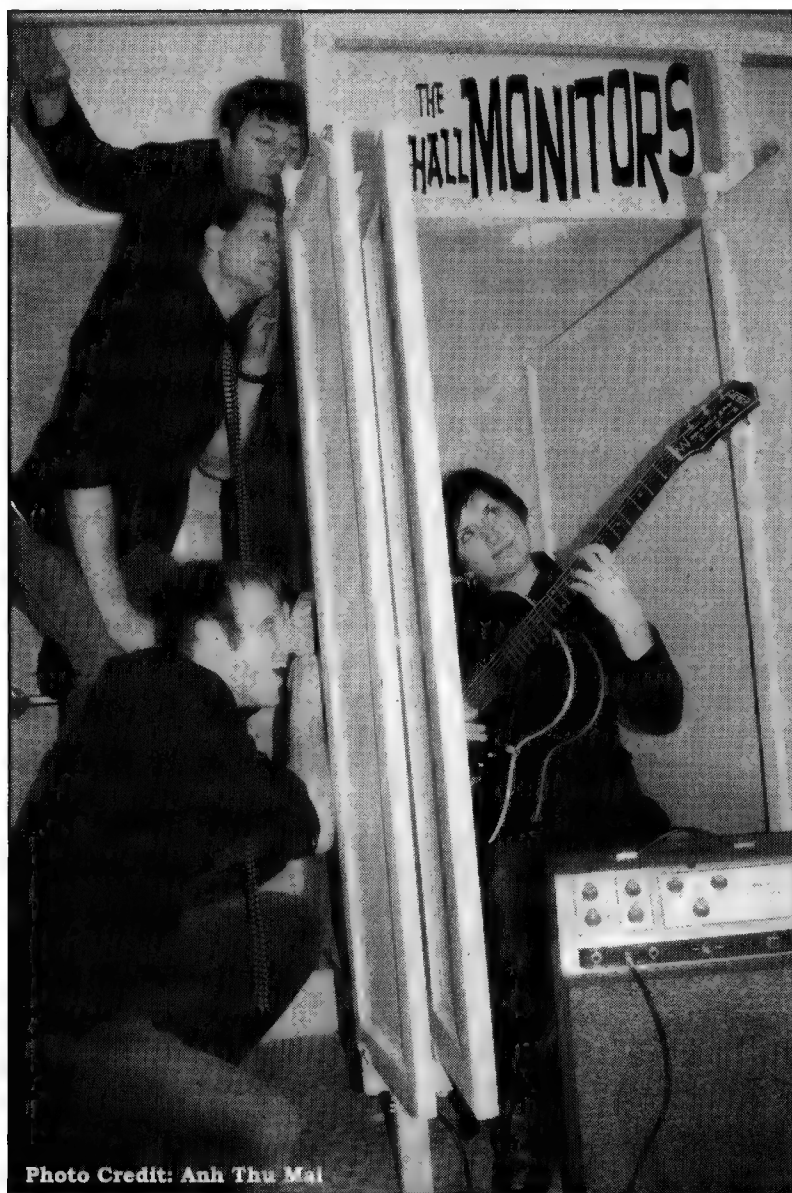
and we would erect some structured building
constructed from memory and boring DNA,
trawling for meaning with philosophy's
neglected nets
in seas of tears that children shed on mother's
pampered pillows
and unmeaning's non-sense still billows
pouring forth waves of absurdity,
god's best enemy who stole his own medicine
reason's excuse for the Nothing's final proof
defining time's latest lie
just another fucking meaningless "why?"

(for) the destiny of consciousness, me,
is amino-acids, water, fat,
sugar, minerals, ash -
food for some tree

Hall Monitors:

Garage Rock Legends In The Making!

By Dom Salemi



OK, I really shouldn't be touting the unassuming brilliance of The Hall Monitors. For many reasons, the principal one: their adamant refusal to sign with Brutarian Records. I can't really blame them; as they are really hot at the moment and have a lot of bigwig A&R types waving their checkbooks at them. Which is to be expected when, in the space of twelve months, a band wins the prestigious Little Stephen's Battle of the Bands and corrals a top slot at Cave Stomp.

And as a part-time journalist I really couldn't turn down a chance to interview a band whose lead singer and founder, Sean Crowley, works about two doors down from me at the Trademark Office. That makes for a good story. Think about it: What are the chances of the leader of one of the hottest bands in the country working on the same floor as the founder of the internationally unread Brutarian? About a gazillion to one, that's what.

But make no mistake about it, The Hall Monitors are the real thing, baby, not some slavish Scandinavian imitation. We're talking a bratty mix of primitive rock and r&b filtered through a snotty, truly damaged sensibility. What the Monitors also have going for them, is not one, but two, count 'em two, hot guitarists in Sean and Ginger, both in possession of a petulant, devil-may-care style. A style which beautifully meshes with a rhythm section comfortable in the knowledge that there is a difference between rocking and in rolling and that only at moments of absolute crisis should the twain meet.

Then there is the matter of Monsieur Crowley's singing. And yowling, howling and snarling - like all effective frontmen, it's all one and the same to him. Damn impressive that he manages to stay in tune and come in on cue when he emotes as violently as he often does. But enough of this nonsense, without further ado, I bring you, ladies and germs . . . The Hall Monitors.

1. There are a lot of bands out there doing the garage thing - although your band is much more than that - how did you manage to get into CaveStomp and onto NPR for an interview? Are you that good?

MIKE: YES, WE ARE. JON WEISS FOUND US ON MYSPACE AND THAT'S THE TRUTH. AS FOR NPR, WELL, WE'RE JUST GEEKS. SEAN CLERKED AT NPR AND MY WIFE USED TO WORK AT WAMU. I LISTEN EVERY DAY. SMOKE 'EM IF YOU GOT 'EM.

Ginger: We got on Cavestomp because the promoter/organizer Jon Weiss asked us to play. I figure he heard us and liked us and thought we would be a good fit for the festival. Being "good enough" is relative, but I definitely think we fit into the lineup. NPR - what Mike said. We're geeks and NPR loves geeks.

2. So just what the hell is garage rock anyway? Little Steven said it is white boys playing r&b and failing . . . gloriously. Agree or disagree?

MIKE: HA! I LIKE THAT. AND I TOTALLY AGREE. BUT WE'RE THE ONLY GARAGE BAND THAT KNOWS HOW TO PLAY THE ORIGINAL SHUFFLE BEAT. BESIDES, WE ARE BLACK. OR BLACKER THAN MOST...<http://www.glidemagazine.com/hiddentrack/listen-to-this-shit-the-hall-monitors/SERIOUSLY> THOUGH, ONE OF THE BEST PROFESSORS I EVER HAD IS A FLAMING BLACK GAY MAN WHO CAN SING LIKE THE WORLD IS ENDING AND HE READ A QUOTE TO US ONE DAY THAT SAID "BLACK PEOPLE CREATE, WHITE PEOPLE RECYCLE" -- I BELIEVED IT THEN; BUT NOW I SEE IT AS "BLACK PEOPLE SAMPLE, WHITE PEOPLE RECYCLE." SOMEONE'S GOTTA KEEP THE REAL SHIT ALIVE!

Ginger: Garage rock nowadays is a mixed bag. There's a whole mesh of influences that span decades and includes everything from early R&B to rockabilly to punk. There's purist groups that meticulously stick to a specific sound and there's hybrid groups; but to me, there's still a sound that places a band within the genre. However, it seems the term "garage"

seems to often be overused and is often quite inaccurate in descriptions of bands, so I think the definition has been a bit distorted.

3. *You've gone on record saying that you're not terribly worried about getting CDs out because that's something of a dead issue in today's listeners' world. Do you feel this is an exciting time with the fall of the record labels and the growth of the Internet? Patti Smith and Juliette Lewis in a recent interview felt that it is because it places everything squarely on the band and their ability to perform.*

MIKE: YEAH, SEAN'S ALL ABOUT THAT. WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE EVER MAKE T-SHIRTS. BUT HE'S RIGHT. SHIT'S ALL DIGITAL NOW. WHICH JUST MAKES VINYL THAT MUCH COOLER. WE ARE MAKING CDS AFTERALL -- SOLD OUT AT CAVESTOMP. THE SPINOUT PACKAGE THIS WINTER WILL CERTAINLY FEATURE A FULL LENGTH CD. NOW THAT PEOPLE DIG US, WE'LL PUT OUT A CD!

Ginger: I think we're in a transitional stage with music as far as formats are concerned. Perhaps eventually everything will only become available in a digital format but for now there continues to be a thriving market for tangible means of purchasing music and I expect there will be for quite some time. Deejays always request vinyl and people constantly ask for CDs. Live shows will always be important as will recorded music.

SEAN: I'M KIND OF AGAINST ALBUMS. SINGLES ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE THE COOL WAY TO GO, AND THEY ARE MAKING A COMEBACK THANKS TO DOWNLOADS. SOME PEOPLE MADE DECENT ALBUMS AS A WHOLE, BUT NOT TOO MANY, AND THERE SURE ISN'T MUCH OF AN EFFORT BY ARTISTS TODAY TO DO IT. HEY JULIETTE, DO YOU MIND IF I PUT MY ARM AROUND YOU?

4. *And speaking of the Internet, how does one go about getting noticed on MySpace? Can it hurt as well as help a band? With what seems like tens of thousands of bands, I'm wondering*

whether it is pure luck in getting any attention at all.

MIKE: INTERNET? OH, YOU MEAN THE GLOBAL INTERWEB, BETTER KNOWN AS MYSPACE. I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA HOW PEOPLE END UP GETTING LAID OR MOLESTED ON MYSPACE. LUCKY BASTARDS. I ONLY KNOW HOW IT WORKS FOR BANDS.

Ginger: I think the ease of access to music and bands via myspace is just par for the course when considering the ease of access to all types of information on the Internet. You get seen/heard by word of mouth but also by playing shows and by interacting with people on a day-to-day basis. It's definitely an expansive communication tool for bands and is also a great way for music fanatics to kill several hours of their day scoping out new bands.

5. *So as they say in Jersey from where most of youse hail, "How cool is that that the publisher of America's coolest underground mag and the founder of America's coolest underground band work not only in the same government building but on the same floor for the same boss and do the same trademark attorney thing?"*

MIKE: THEY ALSO CROSS SWORDS IN THE MEN'S ROOM

SEAN: FRICK YOU, I'M NOT FROM JERSEY. BUT YEAH, IT'S A WEIRD, SMALL WORLD. SPEAKING OF THAT, DID YOU HEAR THAT THE IT'S A SMALL WORLD RIDE AT DISNEY WORLD HAS TO BE SHUT DOWN BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE TOO FAT AND KEEP SINKING THE BOATS? BY THE WAY, OUR BASS PLAYER WORKS HERE NOW, TOO.

Ginger: Mike and I refuse to join that cult.

SEAN: GINGER LIES. SHE APPLIED HERE TOO.

6. *I couldn't help but notice that in your interview with the Trademark Government rag you didn't betray the band's true origins - the three boys singing a*



GETS" AFTER I WAS IN THE BAND. AND I'M BARELY KEEPING MY GARAGE GPA HIGH ENOUGH TO STILL BE DRUMMING FOR THE HALL MONITORS. BUT I DON'T GIVE A FUCK. WATCH ME. DARE ME.

SEAN: I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A RECORD COLLECTION AND I AM BY NO MEANS AN EXPERT ON OBSCURE 60'S MUSIC. I DO HAVE THIS GREAT COMP CALLED "TEENAGE SHUTDOWN VOL. 13" AND IT HAS THIS

drunken version of "Dirty Water" in the drunk tank and a lovely brunette arresting officer taking pity on you and yet seeing the potential so she joined up to make it a foursome - why is that? Afraid of having to go before the Va Legal Board of Ethics?

GREAT BAND CALLED THE MONDELS, THEIR TRACKS ON THERE WERE CERTAINLY NUGGETS WORTHY. BUT I THINK NUGGETS WAS REALLY MORE ABOUT BANDS THAT WERE A LITTLE MORE WELL KNOWN AND ACTUALLY GOT RADIO PLAY. THAT SAID, I'D ALSO SAY THAT LINK WRAY COULD BE ON NUGGETS, AND I THINK HIS INFLUENCE ON ROCK AND ROLL IS LARGELY OVERLOOKED OR UNDERSTATED. SOME CUTS, LIKE WRAY'S DINOSAUR, SEEM TO BE THE ARCHETYPE FOR MOST OF TODAY'S "GARAGE PUNK."

MIKE: WE THOUGHT WE'D BE TOTALLY SAFE IF WE CALLED GINGER A "BRUNETTE."

SEAN: I'M ONLY LICENSED IN NY, PLEASE DON'T TELL THEM

Ginger: We did an interview with the Trade-mark Government rag?

7. Give with a couple of bands that should have been on Lenny Kaye's Nuggets but were left off, and the reason you and the band members think they should have been included?

Ginger: There's quite an array of garage comps (Nuggets, Pebbles, Teenage Shutdown, etc.) so I figure if a band was overlooked on one, they probably ended up on another.

8. Why won't you release a record on my label and help it make some money as you are obviously going straight to the top and so could help a brother lawyer?

MIKE: WELL, I DO KNOW WHAT "NUGGETS" IS NOW AT LEAST. I'LL LET SEAN MOCK ME NOW.... BUT FOR THE RECORD, MY BROTHER AND I GOT HERE PLAYING THE OLD SHIT, THE ORIGINAL ROCK AND ROLL. CHUCK AND BUDDY. STRAIGHT FROM PAPA SULIVAN. I ONLY HEARD ABOUT SAID "NUG-

MIKE: YOU MEAN THIS ISN'T THE TOP? I'M DRUNK, PLAYING DRUMS, AND PEOPLE ARE DANCING LIKE MAD. I'LL SELL MY SOUL TO MAKE ANYONE MONEY PLAYING WITH THIS BAND.



Photo Credit: Nadia Baksh

SIC AND VOCALS ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO DISTRACT YOU FROM THE LYRICAL ELEMENTS OF THE SONG. YEAH, I KNOW THAT'S A REALLY LAME THING FOR SOMEONE IN A DC BAND TO SAY. SORRY IAN.

Ginger: We live and work in DC and we are inundated with politics on daily basis. The music we play is fun and is a refuge from the political bullshit we deal with from day to day so only it seems natural to keep the two things separate.

SEAN: RELEASING A RECORD MEANS WE HAVE TO RECORD, RECORDING IS NOT FUN. THEREFORE, RELEASING A RECORD IS NOT FUN.

MIKE: SEAN RECORDS CONSTANTLY. HE'S AIMING FOR POSTHUMOUS SUCCESS WHEN ALL HIS HOME RECORDINGS ARE FINALLY DISCOVERED.

Ginger: I'm helping one lawyer by playing in this band. Isn't that already one too many?

9. It appears that most garage rock bands, especially early garage rockers were relatively apolitical. Would you agree and the reasons for this as the sound did hit a peak during the tumultuous years of rioting in the streets, the Vietnam War, and the assassinations of JFK, RFK and Martin Luther King.

SEAN: IT SEEMS TO ME THAT POLITICAL STATEMENTS ARE BEST LEFT FOR FOLK MUSIC SINCE MOST OF THE TIME THE MU-

MIKE: WE DO SEND A STRONG MESSAGE EVERY TIME WE PLAY... WE ARE REMINDING PEOPLE WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LET LOOSE, HAVE FUN, AND ABOVE ALL, BE PASSIONATE.

10. How does that lovely little gal in the band able to get a long with three guys? In a situation like this, the gal is usually the lead singer and putative leader of the group so it's not a problem. Does she get groupies?

Ginger: With regards to us getting along, women and men tend to communicate differently so I guess I've learned how to communicate like a guy. I have played in all girl bands, and it's definitely different, but I credit that to different personality types rather than gender differences. Also, these guys have also played together for several years so we had to adjust to the new dynamic when I was thrown into the mix, but it has worked out perfectly. As far as groupies go - the last time I counted I have three and

they're in the band.

11. *Do you think there's going to be a backlash as the band has seemingly come out of nowhere to really make a name for itself, when a number of rock bands from this area have been toiling for years without success. I know a few who really were dismissive of you until they saw you live.*

SEAN: WHO ARE THESE BANDS AND WHAT NAME HAVE WE REALLY MADE FOR OURSELVES? IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE MAKING ANY MONEY OR PARTYING WITH PARIS HILTON. WE'RE NOT EVEN PARTYING WITH PARIS BENNETT. WHILE THIS IS KIND OF DISTURBING, I GUESS IT'S GOOD TO HEAR THAT WE CAN WIN SOME PEOPLE OVER LIVE THAT DIDN'T LIKE US ON PAPER FOR WHATEVER REASONS. THIS IS A WEIRD INDUSTRY, SOME BANDS LITERALLY MAKE IT BIG OVERNIGHT AND DON'T DESERVE IT, OTHERS TOIL AROUND IN UNDESERVED OBSCURITY FOR YEARS, THERE'S NOTHING FAIR ABOUT IT. THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID ABOUT MAKING YOUR OWN LUCK, BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY, I THINK THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN ACTUALLY EARN SUCCESS IS BY WRITING GREAT SONGS, NOT BY PLAYING A CRAPPY CLUB IN TUSCALOOSA ON A TUESDAY NIGHT.

Ginger: Factoring in the length of time a band has been together to determine whether or not they're good or credible seems pretty irrational and would cause a lot of people to miss out on a lot of great new bands. We've done well in the year and a half we've been playing shows. We've had a great start, and it keeps getting better.

12. *And speaking of live your music, even the two songs I heard done acoustically on NPR were/are amazingly powerful. How do you manage to get that sweaty, raw live sound onto record and into an acoustic setting?*

SEAN: THANKS! I DON'T KNOW REALLY, I GUESS WE'VE GOT TO GIVE CREDIT TO THE SOUND ENGINEER?

MIKE: I FIGURE HALF OF OUR "REHEARSALS" OVER THE YEARS HAVE BEEN IN CARS OR ON COUCHES, WHENEVER THERE'S AN IDEA AND AN INSTRUMENT LAYING AROUND.

Ginger: I think it's because we enjoy playing the songs, so it comes across in both settings.

13. *How does the band expect to achieve world domination with a bass player living hundreds of miles from the rest of the band?*

SEAN: FORTUNATELY IT'S THE DRUMMER THAT LIVES OUT OF TOWN... I'VE GOT A CASIO SK1 THAT PRETTY MUCH HANDLES THAT PROBLEM.

Ginger: We're taking a grassroots approach to world domination and Mike was the most qualified doing field work so we sent him to New Mexico.

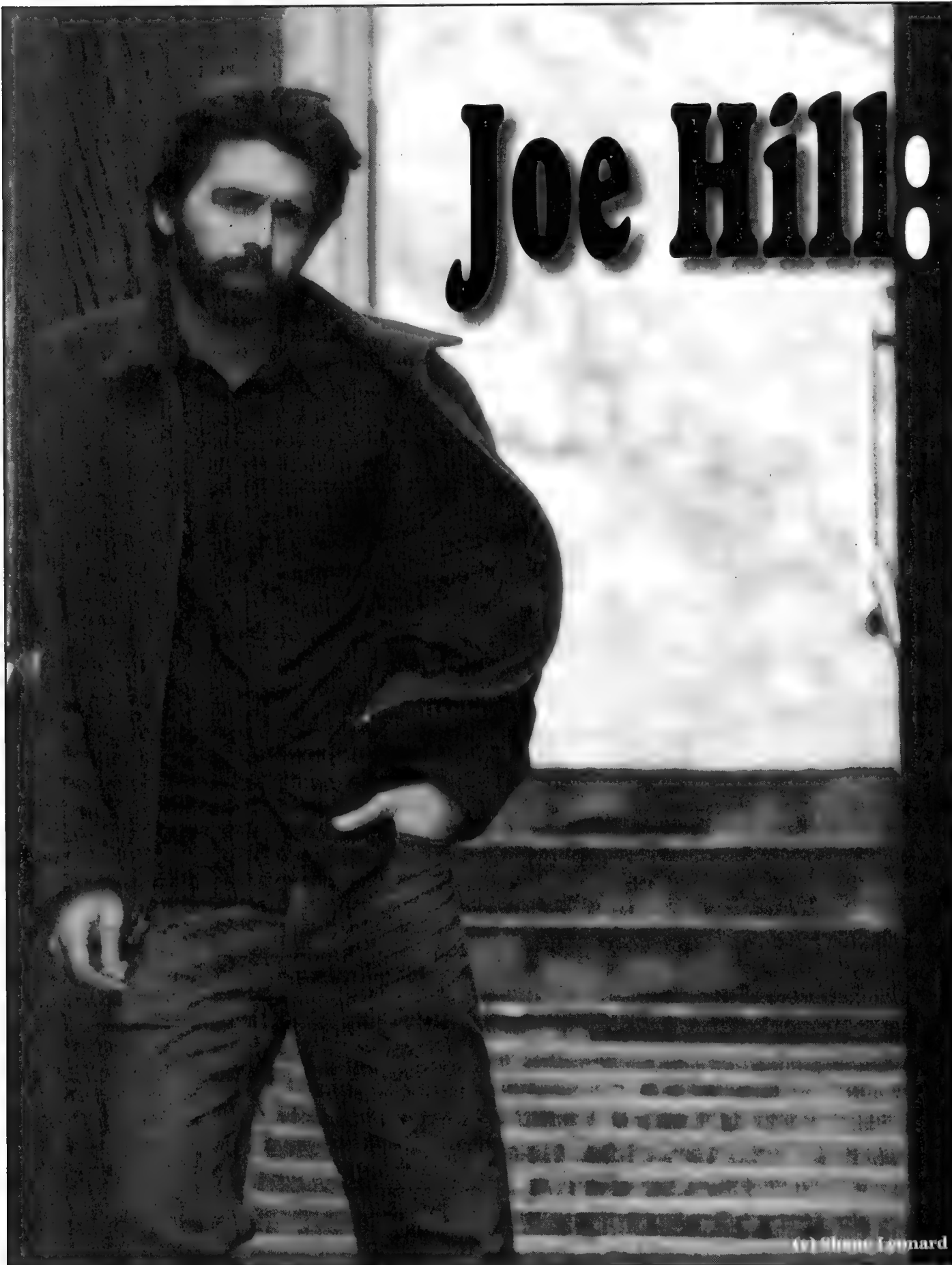
14. *OK, I can balance being a lawyer and write and publisher and record producer, but that's just me doing it solo, how do you, Mr. Crowley, do it, as you have to practice and then perform with the cooperation of others?*

SEAN: WE DON'T PRACTICE NEARLY ENOUGH, SO THAT HELPS SAVE TIME DURING THE WEEK. RED BULLS, OTHER HYPER CAFFEINATED BEVERAGES AND A FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE HELP TOO.

15. *As this goes out to the world, that is my mag, tell us how you won Little Steven's Battle of the Bands competition?*

SEAN: EH, THAT WAS KIND OF GOOFY. WE WERE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE OUR TRACK SELECTED BY WHATEVER SELECTION COMMITTEE THEY HAD, BUT THEN THE REST WAS JUST A POPULARITY CONTEST, AND I THINK WE ALL HAVE LARGE EXTENDED FAMILIES WITH LOTS OF TIME ON THEIR HANDS. THE PRIZE WAS PRETTY PRICELESS THOUGH, AND WELL WORTH ALL OF THE HOURS OF CHILDBIRTH THAT OUR MOTHERS, AUNTS AND GRANDMOTHERS HAD TO ENDURE IN ORDER TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Joe Hill



(c) Shane Leonard

Making It on His Own Terms

By Michael McCarty and Connie (Corcoran) Wilson

Author Joe Hill has been writing fiction for the past ten years, but kept his true identity as Stephen and Tabitha King's son secret for as long as possible, while he struggled to make it on the merit of his work, alone. With success came disclosure of his true identity, revealed by *Variety* magazine in 2006. Word spread that Joseph Hillstrom King was writing as Joe Hill. [Hill wishes he could have preserved the pseudonym through the release of his first novel.]

Born in Bangor, Maine, in 1972 (after his parents' marriage in 1971), Joe has a sister, Naomi, Rachel, and a brother, Owen, who also writes. He graduated from Vassar College in 1995 with an English degree and began selling mainstream and fantasy pieces in 1996. He also writes comics, including the "Fanboyz" issue of *Spider Man Unlimited* (2005). There is even a small collaborative piece with his father in his past works, entitled "But Only Darkness Loves Me," preserved in the University of Maine's collection of Stephen King's works, which consists of two pages, one typewritten, one handwritten, that young Joe and his dad worked on together. That early paternal mentoring extended to "plotting" games that King would play with his kids, asking them to create a plot from situations he set up that might be termed "writing prompts" if published online.

Now thirty-six, Joseph Hillstrom King married young. He and his wife, Leonora, ---who remains his chief literary critic--- live in an isolated part of New Hampshire with their three kids, a rabbit and a dog. He has written serious literary pieces, but returned to a style that some have dubbed "slipstream," combining elements of science fiction, horror, fantasy, mystery and realism.

Hill admits that he struggled when he started out (the first novel he wrote remains unpublished), but he has been gaining a great deal of momentum since the publication of his first book of fourteen short stories, *Twentieth Century Ghosts*, and his latest novel *Heart-Shaped Box*, has been critically acclaimed and optioned by Hollywood.

Hill has also received a number of writing awards, including selection as a Ray Bradbury Fellowship recipient; the William L. Crawford 2006 Award for Best New Fantasy Writer; the A.E. Coppard Long Fiction Prize in 1999; a Bram Stoker Award for Best Fiction Collection; a British Fantasy Award; and the first-ever Sydney J. Bounds Best Newcomer Award (Sept. 23, 2007), presented to him at the 31st Fantasycon and awarded by the British Fantasy Society.

For those who wonder about the choice of "Joe Hill" as his writing alias, one can, of course, reference his middle name, but it is worth noting that the original Joe Hill was a union organizer executed (very likely wrongfully) for murder in Utah on November 19, 1915. The leader of the Industrial Workers of the World (or Wobblies) was memorialized in a song that has this first verse,

"I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you or me.
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead."
"I never died," says he.

Lyrics of one Joe Hill song say: "In the dark of night Joe would stay awake and write. In the morning he would raise them with a song...And he wrote his words to the tunes of the day..."

Appropos. The author Joe Hill admits to a one-time fascination with heavy-metal music (talking enthusiastically about a KISS concert he saw at age eight), but now claims to be listening more to Johnny Cash C&W stuff, to inspire his creative muse. Music is an integral part of *Heart-Shaped Box*, as well, with a protagonist (Jude) who is a rock star.

Hill has said that, in his writing, he first seeks an audience "hook" and then works to establish a main character with something interesting going on inside. His opinion: "A good story is one that takes the reader some place interesting and unexpected, and asks interesting questions along the way. It doesn't have to have answers. The readers will supply those."

BRUTARIAN: *Twentieth Century Ghosts* was rejected by every American publisher, but you finally were published in England with the small press publisher PS. Did it give you a great deal of satisfaction, after that, to have the book win the British Fantasy Award, two Bram Stokers, the International Horror Guild Award and the World Fantasy Award? Along the same lines, when the book was being shopped in England, were you worried that it might receive the same fate it had suffered in the United States, or were you more confident because your stories had been published by English magazines such as *The Third Alternative* (as well as appearing in Stephen Jones' anthology *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror*.)

Hill: Even before *Ghosts* got turned down everywhere in the US, I had tried to sell other books, also without any luck. And collections are famously hard to sell. So I wouldn't say I was particularly hopeful that we'd be able to find a buyer for the book in England, even though I had started to appear in UK magazines with some regularity. And in fact, Peter Crowther at PS initially refused to look at the whole book, because his publishing schedule was already pretty full up. But he said he'd read a couple of my unpublished short stories for his magazine, *Postscripts*, and I sent him "Best New Horror" and "My Father's Mask." After he read those, he changed his mind, said he'd read the rest of my manuscript. I think what finally sold him on the book was the third

story in the collection, "Pop Art." It was by far my luckiest professional day. I've spent the time since wandering around in daydream country, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

BRUTARIAN: Humor and horror seem to go hand-in-hand in stories like "Better than Home" and "Pop Art." What is your working theory about the place of humor within the horror genre?

Hill: Yeah, humor and horror are almost two sides of the same coin. With just a little psychological tweaking, the hero of the *40-Year-Old Virgin* could be Buffalo Bill from *Silence of the Lambs*. Seriously, think about it: an isolated man with a terror of female sexuality. Cast Steve Carell in that role and it's a comedy. Cast Ted Levine and you got a serial killer.

BRUTARIAN: Were you inspired by serial killer John Wayne Gacy when you wrote "The Black Phone"?

Hill: The villain is a bit of a riff on John Wayne Gacy. That's probably the weakest thing about the story. Short stories, comic books, TV shows, and movies, all rely on the judicious use of narrative shorthand. Stick someone in a leather jacket: bang, he's the cool guy. Show the head of the Statue of Liberty on a beach somewhere: okay, we're seeing the end of the world. You're always looking for a way to achieve the desired result in the fewest number of words. The danger is that any bit of narrative shorthand can quickly degenerate into cliché. I came very close to extending "The Black Phone" into a novel, but resisted on the grounds that Al Cross, my serial killer, was too familiar. In the limited space of a short story, he works.

BRUTARIAN: The title story in *Twentieth Century Ghosts* has the protagonist, Alec Sheldon, encounter the ghost of a woman in a small town movie theater who committed suicide before she saw the end of the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. Why that particular film?

Hill: I needed a film everyone over the age of ten has seen, a common reference,

Author of the *New York Times* Bestseller
Heart-Shaped Box

JOE HILL



20TH CENTURY GHOSTS

Introduction by Christopher Golden

that would connect with the emotional concerns of the story. My protagonist, Alec, learns how to feel from the movies. The Rosebud Theater becomes his home, his emotional center. And *The Wizard of Oz* is also about finding home.

BRUTARIAN: The short stories in *Twentieth Century Ghosts* and your novel *Heart-Shaped Box* both prominently feature ghosts. What is it about ghosts that attracted you? Do you believe that ghosts really exist?

Hill: I found my voice when I began to tell ghost stories, and so for that reason I believe in ghosts intensely... as a writer. Writing "Twentieth Century Ghost" was a big turning point for me. Prior to that story, I had only written two emotionally satisfying shorts: "Pop Art" and "Better Than Home." But after "Ghost," I ran off a whole string of stories that I thought worked pretty well, and which formed the core of my collection. What those stories all had in common were protagonists who were haunted in one fashion or another... sometimes literally, sometimes not.

As for whether ghosts exist in the real world, I'll just say that the evidence for them isn't good.

BRUTARIAN: In "Voluntary Committal," there is a line: "It seems to me the quality that separates the popular from the unpopular is a strong sense of self." Do you feel that this is also a theme that resonates in your novel *Heart-Shaped Box*?

Hill: Yes. That line, from "Voluntary Committal," was the seed of Jude's character. Jude's first and most powerful artistic creation was himself, his distinctive rock star persona. The reason he's so hard to destroy is his particular sense of self, which obviates his other flaws.

I think every artist's primary job is to invent themselves... which is just another way of saying the first and biggest challenge an artist faces is to find their voice.

BRUTARIAN: All the girls in *Heart-Shaped Box* seem to be Goth types, so much so that Jude uses their state of origin to distinguish among them. Did you, personally, meet that many Goth girls while growing up in Maine?

Hill: No, but I'm closely in touch with my own inner Goth. I was just always careful to keep that kind of sensibility on the inside. With my Dad who he

is, I figured if I wore black fingernail polish and bought my clothes at Hot Topic, I'd be a walking joke.

BRUTARIAN: Both of your books focus on unhappy characters. What is it about unhappy people that has caused you to focus on them, in particular, and are you worried that readers will start thinking that, because you depict so much unhappiness in your work(s), you are unhappy?

Hill: James Ellroy's mother was murdered when he was a child. Her killer was never found. As an adult, he wrote a memoir about it, *My Dark Places*, and employed a retired cop named Harry Stoner to help him reopen the case. Stoner lit into Ellroy in their very first meeting, said to him: "Why are all the police officers in your stories wife-beating, drug-snorting shithheads on the take?"

Ellroy stayed cool, just replied, "Good cops make for bad fiction."

I guess that's how I feel about almost any protagonist. Happy, contented people just aren't that interesting to write about.

On a similar note, Vonnegut talked about how he was always losing and then regaining his equilibrium, which is the plot of all fiction. I try and keep that line in mind whenever I start a story. At the most basic level, almost every story is about someone who's lost their mojo, and is trying to get it back.

BRUTARIAN: In the story "You Will Hear the Locust Sing" Francis Kay turns into a man-eating insect. Which was the bigger influence on this story: the 1950s big bug movies or Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*?

Hill: Probably the big bug movies, because that's what I came to first. "The Metamorphosis" was an adult pleasure, but THEM! was a Sunday morning classic I first caught when I was about twelve. So that one runs a little deeper.

BRUTARIAN: In your novel *Heart-Shaped Box*, the inscription appears, "For my dad, one of the good ones," but you have depicted some pretty horrible fathers in your work, including Jude's in that novel. Are the "bad ones" (i.e., the bad fathers) you write

about pure figments of your imagination or have you run across some fathers like these up-close-and-personal, in real life?

Hill: I've had some friends who came out of less than great family situations. But if I tend to obsess about bad fathers, that's probably because I'm a dad myself, and it's easy for me to imagine all the ways I could fuck things up.

My Dad has always stayed emotionally and intellectually engaged with his kids. He's been there every day of my life for me. Dedicating a book to him is a thin way to say thanks, but it's all I got.

BRUTARIAN: Do you have favorites among the fiction written by your parents? And what is the best advice your parents ever gave you about becoming a writer?

Hill: Hard to pick favorites. They've both written so much great stuff. My brother's first book, *We're All In This Together*, was pretty classic too.

I spent three years writing this novel, *The Fear Tree*, an epic dark fantasy, nine hundred pages long. It wound up getting turned down everywhere, in three countries, by big press and small press alike. When I finally understood that all that work was for nothing, I was pretty demoralized. I said to my mom, "What am I going to do now?" She said, "You're going to write another book." Which was what I needed to hear.

BRUTARIAN: What can you tell us about your latest work-in-progress? Can you tell us a bit about your next book?

Hill: The new novel is done in first draft... all except for the last two or three scenes, which I decided not to write until I had done some revision. It's another weird thriller, but not really constructed along the lines of *Heart-Shaped Box*. Maybe it has a vibe more along the lines of "Voluntary Committal."

I've got a comic coming along as well, a story called "*Locke & Key*." It's about three kids who become the caretakers of a New England mansion with unusual properties. The house contains several enchanted doors, and by walking through them, a person can fundamentally change their identity: become a ghost, or a member of the opposite sex, or someone from another race. And there's also a black door that should never be opened, and which these three kids have to defend. "*Locke & Key*" is actually a string of five or six connected stories, that together make a single overarching narrative.

And I'm also in talks with Vertigo about taking over one of their series characters. But that'll have to wait until after I turn in the new novel.

BRUTARIAN: Do you prefer writing short (i.e., short stories) or writing long (i.e., novels)?

Hill: They both have their pros and cons. Comics are a lot more fun to write than either.

BRUTARIAN: This is a quote from "Voluntary Committal" (p. 277): "In the end, people usually get a bit more of what they want than they can really handle, don't they?" Do you think that statement is true of the horror genre, in general,...of life, in general.....? Can you elaborate a bit more for us, using the quote as a conversational jumping-off point?

Hill: Well, the guy who says that is probably clinically depressed, and dealing with a lot of guilt issues. That's his point-of-view, not mine. I've spent most of my life wallowing in works of the imagination. I haven't had more of that than I can handle so far, and I hope I never do.

BRUTARIAN: What is your position on writing horror and fantasy as the genre relates to mainstream "literature"? Any thoughts?

Hill: This is a good time to be writing horror and fantasy, a time in which you won't necessarily be dismissed by the literary mainstream just because you're writing about ghosts or boy wizards. There's a whole crew of writers – Michael Chabon, Jon Lethem, Kelly Link, Neil Gaiman – who have done a lot to invite genre fiction back into the larger family of mainstream literature. Their work has, for the moment, persuaded a lot of critics that this fantasy thing isn't necessarily so bad. At the same time, you hang around long enough, you start to see that what's in fashion now won't be in a few years. So horror and fantasy will be uncool again soon enough. Just give the pendulum time to swing back the other way.

"An Interview with Sidney Pink"

By David Hayes

"Might as well do this now, I don't know how much longer I've got left," jokes Sid Pink. Heralded as one of the industry's most daring, innovative and overlooked writer/director/producers, Sidney Pink sits back in his Florida home not even hinting that the man behind *Angry Red Planet* (1959), *Journey to the Seventh Planet* (1962), *Bwana Devil* (1950) and *Reptilicus* (1961) is anything but your average retiree. As one of the first truly successful independent film producers in the United States and abroad, Sid Pink is in a league all his own.

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh in 1936 with a degree in business administration, Pink traveled to the starry-eyed land of Hollywood. He eventually landed a job as Production Budget Manager with Phil Krasne's Grand National Pictures. While there, Pink worked with the great James Cagney and Tex Ritter. His first production for Grand National, and with James Cagney, was *Something to Sing About* (1937). "I learned a great deal from Jimmy Cagney. He was an "Old Show Business" kind of guy... undefeatable. He taught me things at Grand National that I used up until my last few pictures." When Cagney resigned from Grand National, the ship was quickly sinking and Pink found work as a Production Manager with Harry Cohn's Columbia Pictures. Pink created the Production Budget Department at Columbia that would keep track of the production budget on every picture, with a detailed report delivered to Cohn everyday. Cohn, a notorious blow-hard that treated people like dirt, called Pink into his office one day and threw a tantrum concerning the latest budget report (that Pink had not gotten to review yet). "In my own colorful language, I proceeded to tell Cohn off. He shut his mouth and stared at me while I outyelled him. By the

time I got to the second floor I was met at my office with my paycheck and my employee pass was pulled." Pink said goodbye to Columbia Pictures and Harry Cohn over a misplaced decimal point. Pink stayed out of filmmaking until 1950, and then came back with a vengeance. He made *Bwana Devil*, with Robert Stack, the world's first 3-D color movie. This would be just the tip of the iceberg for Sid Pink's role as a "film innovator."

Always, "...fascinated with science-fiction," Pink penned one of the most highly regarded science fiction epics of the fifties, namely, *Angry Red Planet*. Using a process called Cinemagic, Pink became the first director in the history of motion pictures to attempt to bring a viewing audience to the surface of a planet.

"It [*Angry Red Planet*] was written on my kitchen table. My kids were my critics, they'd tell me what was good and what just fell flat!" Eventually, Pink had enough "good" material to go into pre-production. Written, produced, directed and completely financed by Pink, the best that they were hoping for was to break even. He and his production partners were very pleasantly surprised.

"The damn Cinemagic didn't work like it should. It was supposed to be sort of a 3-D effect. What we came up with was great anyway!" Essentially, the Cinemagic process flipped the positive and negative on the film. What would normally be a black image became a white image and vice versa. This effects process was used every time the astronauts visited the planet of Mars to a startling effect. It makes the planetside visits look completely surreal. Layered with a red tint, the audience could almost expect to be on a different planet. "From the checks I still seem to be getting, the picture is still playing. I read recently that it was on American Movie Classics, on cable." *Angry* was released by American International Pictures headed up by

the notorious Sam Arkoff.

"Arkoff and I had a working relationship. Neither of us trusted the other... which worked out well because I wouldn't touch him with a ten foot pole. Jimmy Nicholson was the brains of that operation. With Arkoff, you never got a straight count." Although *Angry Red Planet* was a great success by independent standards, Pink never really got the return on the picture that would have been his due with normal, non-Hollywood, accounting.

Pink left sci-fi for a while, but then made a distinct return with *Journey to the Seventh Planet*. "Journey was a delight for me. For the first time I was able to do exactly what I thought needed be done, without other approvals. As the author, director and producer, my only limitation was my pocketbook and my imagination." *Journey* went into production before Pink's other sci-fi/monster films (*Angry* and *Reptilicus*) had begun to make any money. Still in Denmark from a previous production, Pink decided to film there with the \$75,000 in his account. The first problem that *Journey* ran into was the spaceship set. "How do you build a spaceship in a country that scoffs at the very idea of it? That's where my burlesque stage experience came in very handy." Pink placed a few grills in the walls, gathered a few sound meters from his sound technician and posted "Starboard" and "Port Atomic Engine" signs in the room. Instant starship.

"The idea for the story [of *Journey*] came from a theory I had read, that the human brain is so complex and vast in its potential that no human has ever been able to use more than twenty percent of its capacity... I love that story and regret to this day that I didn't nurture it more and

give it the kind of budget and production values it really deserved. To my dying day I shall maintain that *Journey* was and is a great sci-fi story, and at the considerable risk of being called egotistical, I must assert that the rip-offs of my story only help to prove its universality and fascination. I have seen the *Star Trek* cycle succeed with less worthy scripts."

Pink's, "hobby of science fiction" took him from a little hamlet in Denmark to Mars, Uranus and to the center of the earth with *Reptilicus* ("a real monster of a picture, no pun intended").

Pink followed *Journey* with a score of highly regarded films including *The Castilian* (1962, with Cesar Romero), *Reptilicus* (still playing today on television, and a prestige format screenplay book has just been released with some great never-before-seen pictures), *Madigan's Millions* (1968, having the dubious honor of being Dustin Hoffman's first film work) and *The Man from O.R.G.Y.* (1970, Sid Pink's disastrous, and only, "attempt at sex," on film) among many others. Pink has also written an autobiography, titled *So You Want to Make Movies: My Life as an Independent Film Producer*, which was published in 1989 by Pineapple Press, Inc. and is still available. Currently Sidney Pink is, "enjoying his retirement," and, "occasionally makes it out to a couple conventions a year." And, just to stay on the top of his game, Pink writes weekly and monthly columns for *The Brauerd County News*, in Florida, and *The Senior News*.

Sadly, Sidney Pink passed away late in 2002 before the publication of this article. He will be fondly remembered for his contribution to the film industry.

altarwise

By David McLean

and Abaddon finds fine meat on bones
that dream the deadest dead,
when the bad from man falls splitting off,
spitting life's lies, and, suckled by time,
the castrated savior on the cross.

for no man could kill his mothering maggot
maundering crapulence from the divine chalice,
and sweet feet crossed Jesus foul sea of grief, thief of time,
and grew Amanda's pool of polluted holy water behind her,
her god's only daughter;

and nothing remained
days came to stay
beyond death's loving laughter
and charming factitious cancer.



Illustration by Chris Kroczyk

THE WASHER AT THE FORD

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
By Libby Faucette
● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Time had kindly stopped for the gas station on the hill. Seventy years or more had intervened since the station had been built, but Thompson's Gas and Grocery remained, soberly graying as it settled into Little Delphi's red clay dust. It sat at a dead man's crossroad, the steep curve of the land and its lonely meeting of ways playing host to more accidents than its one-way stop sign had the power to prevent. Ancient gas pumps sat squat and rusted between the brick columns supporting the porch, their rounded tops and cracked hoses bearing mute testimony of a simpler, quieter age. And except for the narrow blacktop where once a dirt road had wound its lonely path past the station, that age might have been there still.

Mike Fitzgerald eased his battered Nissan into the tiny space between the pumps and the road, gravel crunching beneath his tires. The Nissan was a wreck, but it looked positively new next to the gas station time forgot. Mike grinned at the contrast as he peered through his car's spotted windshield. He'd been only partly aware that such places still existed, and it was hard to imagine why anyone would want to drive nine miles from town to buy groceries and gas. It wasn't completely isolated—Mike had passed a few older houses along the way, and even at the store, a rambling white farmhouse squatted among sheltering pecans with only the two-lane blacktop dividing them. Still, nine miles took a person to Dashville, which actually boasted a trio of stop lights and a McDonald's, for Pete's sake.

Yet the old place seemed to be getting along just fine, if not precisely thriving. It was still there,

for one thing, despite the evidence of nearly a century resting on its sagging shoulders, and more cars than Mike's red Nissan crowded the tiny graveled parking lot, most of them far older and dismal than his own. They sat squeezed close to the pickup trucks that hulked over all like bullies in a schoolyard. Mike sent the Nissan creeping through their midst and eased his car into a spot beside the road, then he gathered his bag from the seat beside him and unfolded himself into the sunshine.

He slung the satchel over his shoulder as the car door clunked behind him. Eyes squinted against the light, Mike traced a complicated path between sun-glittered cars and dusty bumpers toward the gas station's door. It stood open beneath the porch, baring the dim confines of the grocery beyond its maw, black and cool as a cave. Gravel crunched and slithered beneath his sneakers, an uncertain footing he failed to enjoy, until he reached the gritty concrete that served as an entrance and emerged, blinking like a mole in reverse, within the station's soft brown darkness.

Somewhere inside, a pinball machine clattered and dinged. Glass-fronted, refrigerated cases making a futile grab for the present hummed against the far wall, while low shelves stacked with neat rows of cans and dry goods crowded together to his right. To his left, the register waited in the gloom, perched like an afterthought on a counter gleaming with scrubbed care and the stolidity of age. Wire racks at its feet held declining rows of candy bars. A small, barefoot girl in disheveled ponytails eyed the selection while sucking on her forefinger. She looked up at Mike with

that vague sort of interest children had with non-threatening strangers, and he returned the regard with a smile and a nod before she went back to studying the candy.

He could hear voices on the far side of the counter, male and subdued with humor, but no one marked him but the child as he made his way toward the drink case. Its door opened heavily on a rush of cold air that felt great, however brief, the sterile smell of winter chasing away the decaying must of tired wood that always lingered inside old buildings. It was like old books gone irrevocably bad--Mike thought of it as a 'poor people' smell. He felt fleeting shame at that, but it was gone before the drink case thumped shut and his steps took him back to the counter.

The little girl backed solemnly out of his way so he could set down his bottled soda. She eyed him for a second, then spun about almost comically, as if suddenly spooked, to scurry through the open door. Ducking from that rectangle of dusty sunlight, she disappeared from view, but it wasn't long before someone else replaced her.

"Is that it for ya today?" A man ambled into view from the direction of those clustered male voices, round-shouldered with a sullen posture at odds with the smile peeking from his beard. The latter hugged his face, black as a bear and streaked with silver. He wore a baseball cap with *Thompson's Gin* stitched in dingy white above a dark blue brim. Nodding toward Mike's drink, he approached the register.

"Yeah, that's it for today." Mike reached for his wallet while the register beeped its assent. He paid for the drink, silently amused by the difference in price between there and the city, then opened the bottle with a preparatory clearing of his throat.

"I need some directions, if you don't mind."

"Shoot," the man said amiably. "Where ya headed?"

"Swift Creek. Have you heard of it?"

"Oh, yeah. It's about four, five miles up the road that way." He inclined his head in the general direction of the main road running past the store--the same road Mike had already covered through most of the afternoon, to no avail. "Why?" the man asked. "Goin' fishin'?"

"No, not really." Mike took a casual drink; the soda burned nicely all the way down. "I'm a

writer for the Telegram. I'm doing a piece on the abandoned gold mines in northern Nash County." Even now, after weeks of research, the words sounded silly in his mouth. North Carolina was hardly known for its gold mines, but nevertheless, the mines had been there. The paper hoped it would make a nice special interest piece once the series was finished. "I was hoping to check out one of them. The information I could find at the courthouse said the biggest mine used to be near an old grist mill on Swift Creek--"

Another voice chimed in from the gathering of men. "You talkin' 'bout that place up by March Farm hunt club?"

"I don't know if I am or not." Mike offered a smile in their general direction; he still couldn't see them behind the bulk of the counter. "I got directions at the courthouse, but no one said anything about a hunt club. They told me to take Thompson's Store Road toward 561, but I reached the stop sign and I knew I'd gone too far. I drove over a couple of creeks, but none of them had access roads or anything resembling a mill, as far as I could tell."

"No." The man at the register shook his head. "Best way to get to that old mill is to turn just past the hunt club. There's a dirt road runs to the right; that's the one ya want."

Mike nodded slowly. He had seen more than one unpaved road past the intersection of Thompson's Store and Harrison. While he claimed no recollection of the hunt club, there had been no reason to look for it, either. He imagined he could find it now that he knew to watch for signs. "Where do I go once I turn?" he asked.

"Well, it's down there a-ways. Hard place to find unless ya know where to look."

"It's not a problem. If you give me directions, I can write them down--" Mike set his bottle on the counter and opened his bag for a pad and pen, but the man made an odd sort of sound that gave him pause. Mike looked up, brows raised expectantly.

"You're not a local, are ya." It wasn't phrased as a question.

"Local enough," Mike replied, amusement warring with irritation. "I grew up in Sandy Cross, less than twenty miles from here." God, he'd forgotten how peculiar some folks could be. He'd moved to Nash County when he was five, but

damned if they still couldn't hear Virginia in his speech. "I don't suppose it matters, does it? Not if you give me good directions--"

"Not really a place to be goin' this time a' day." The man paused, regarding Mike with a strange sort of calm. "Unless you're fishin'. Might wanna wait 'til tomorrah."

It seemed like such an odd thing to say, for a moment Mike could only stare at him, hands frozen halfway through the action of removing the pen from his bag. Offered a polite, puzzled snort, his eyes slipped briefly from the man's face to his unseen companions hidden beside the counter. A lopsided and somewhat patronizing smile tipped his mouth. "Okay. I was hoping to get up there today, not tomorrow, while it's still early in the afternoon."

"Not early *enough*." It was said with an emphasis so faint Mike wasn't sure he'd heard it at all. The man glanced toward the open doorway as if gauging the remaining daylight—which seemed bizarre to the point of foolishness as far as Mike was concerned, as the sun wouldn't set for some hours yet, the twilight lingering as it always did in the summer months. The cashier looked at Mike again, and perhaps he read the skepticism there, for a subtle, deprecating awareness seemed to peek from the scrub of his beard.

"That ole mill," he said softly. "It's dangerous. Lotsa broken things an' sharp, rusted metal hidin' in the tall grass up 'round that creek. Not the sorta place you oughta be wanderin' this time a-day, 'less you're familiar with the area."

Mike chewed on that for a moment, then nodded vaguely and went about the business of closing up his bag. His mind raced, for while he had no doubt the stranger knew perfectly well how to give him precise directions to Swift Creek and the remains of the mill—and the remains of his mine—he also knew implacable, unreasonable Southern stubbornness when it looked him in the eye. There were always methods of getting around them, but it took a quick mind, else the window of opportunity afforded by the man's patience would vanish and Mike would be left standing at the counter like the upriver, townie fool they thought he was--

"Then it sounds like I need someone who's familiar with the area." Mike gave the latch on his bag a decisive snap. He looked up again, brush-

ing the hair from his eyes with a wry, apologetic smile. "Do you know anyone who'd be willing to do it? I'll drive, of course--"

"No." The man shook his head, his lips thinning until they vanished in his beard. "No, not me. Not anyone else, either. Too late inna day for that."

Exasperation crept into Mike's expression at last. *Too late in the day for that*. Summer sunlight flooded the parking lot, turning the afternoon into a blinding befuddlement of glittering cars and soft black hardtop, but to hear *this* man talk, the sun was setting and twilight coming on fast. "I'd be willing to pay," he said deliberately. And he would, too; the Telegram took care of his on-road expenses, and he reasoned a guide would fall nicely within their parameters. "I just need someone to go with me and help me find the mill."

"I'm hearin' ya, mister, but you're not gonna find someone who'd--"

"How much ya payin'?" Their unseen company spoke up again from behind the counter, and this time Mike had a face to go with it. A second man stood up, his grizzled head appearing to the left of a rack of novelty key chains. Muddy brown eyes peered at him from a tanned, seamed face, above a sun-dried beard whose length reminded Mike of a refugee from ZZ Top.

"Sit down, stupid," the cashier said. His voice held an undercurrent of weary disgust. "This fella ain't payin' you nothin'."

ZZ Top ignored him. "How much?" he asked again.

Mike consulted his inner scale. "Fifty dollars."

"Fifty? Jesus--"

"Done." ZZ Top turned away, negotiating the racks and a stack of cased Coke before reappearing around the side of the counter. He was dressed in grimy blue jeans and a no-color faded T-shirt. Heavy work boots thudded against the floor. "You wanna go now, 'fore it gets too late?" he asked gruffly. "I ain't got nothin' better to do this afternoon--"

The register man watched this exchange with a frustrated scowl. He looked like a man who wanted to lose his temper but couldn't for propriety's sake. "What're you gonna do with fifty dollars, huh? You don't need it. You're just gonna piss it away on beer--"

"Yeah, we can go now," Mike interrupted. The melodrama was a bit much. "My car's out front. I can drive us both, then bring you back here after we're done."

"Sounds good. Lemme stop by the bathroom and I'll meetcha outside."

"Great." Mike favored the grizzled fellow with an open grin. "Take your time. I'll be out by the car."

ZZ Top nodded grimly and stumped away, leaving Mike temporarily alone with the sourpuss behind the register. Still wearing his aw-shucks smile, he tipped the neck of his soda bottle toward the man in cocky salute. "Thanks. You have a good day now."

The man said nothing, only eyeing him blankly as he pushed the register closed.

Mike stepped back through the open doorway, squinting as the summer sunlight seared his eyes after the cool, shady confines of the store. A low-pitched, whining rumble carried across the graveled lot; he glanced toward the road as a nameless piece of farm equipment lumbered by, huge and green and alien. The little girl he had seen inside was crouched beside the blacktop, only a foot or so from his car. She looked up as well, watching the machinery go by with grave interest, her disheveled hair stirring like sea-grass in the accompanying breeze.

"Maybe you shouldn't sit so close to the road." Mike smiled, making his admonition an amiable one, and crossed the lot at a slow, crunching pace. The little girl half-turned to look at him, then went back to what she was doing--which, as Mike drew closer, he could see was drawing sand pictures on the asphalt. The girl had an empty Coke bottle, an older style made of clear glass that caught the sunlight in greasy ripples. She had filled it with sand from the shoulder, and now used its narrow neck and mouth to pour that sand in long, meaningless loops and spirals that stood out starkly against the blacktop.

"I heard you talkin' to Mr. Patterson in there," she said.

Mike reached his car. "Oh yeah?" He leaned against the sun-warmed trunk and fished his keys from his pocket. "And which one is he?"

"The one goin' with you to the creek." She drew another sandy squiggle. "He's crazy," she added, a matter-of-fact pronouncement. "I

wouldn't want to go down there. And Ma says I'm not supposed to, anyway."

"You know about the creek?"

"Uh-huh. I can walk to it from my house." The girl stopped abruptly. She seemed to gaze at her sand-shapes as if pondering a thought--whatever deep, sweet thoughts a child her age might have--then she looked up at Mike, her blue eyes crinkling against the sun. "You wanna watch out for the wash lady, okay?"

Mike offered a curious grin. "The wash lady?"

"You 'bout ready, mister?"

Mike turned around. ZZ Top--the one the girl had called Mr. Patterson--was ambling across the parking lot. At his appearance, the girl picked up her bottle and walked away, threading a path between the vehicles to disappear inside the store once more. Mike watched her go, feeling puzzled but amused.

"Yeah, I'm ready." He gestured toward his car. "Hop in. It's unlocked."

"Good deal." The man ambled around and popped open the door, then slumped into the passenger seat as Mike mirrored him on the other side. The man's smell washed over Mike, growing stronger as both doors clunked shut. He smelled of the dirt grimed into his hands and beneath his nails, the outdoors and cigarette smoke. It wasn't altogether pleasant.

"All right, then." Mike started the engine with a coughing rumble. "Which way do I want to get out of here? Back up Thompson's Store Road?"

"Yeah. You was goin' the right way. You wanna head up toward 561, like ya said."

"Sounds good." Mike backed up carefully, then pulled forward, putting them back on the main road, such as it was. "The name's Mike, by the way," he said, casting a glance at the fellow beside him. "Mike Fitzgerald. That little girl back there says you're Mr. Patterson?"

"That's right." His companion stretched his hand out sideways. "Honey Patterson. Pleased to meetcha."

"Honey Patterson?" Mike shook the proffered hand with a grin. "No offense, but you're kidding, right?"

"Nawp." Honey grinned back, friendly despite the conspicuous absence of several teeth. "Real name's Albert, but I picked up 'Honey' back in

the army. Name stuck, I guess."

Mike chuckled. "All right then, Mr. Honey. Let's see if we can find that mine."

"Gotta find the creek, first. Ya wanna keep goin' straight, on through the next crossroads."

"That I can do."

Mike followed Thompson's Store Road through rolling farm country, its borders marked by long threads of post-and-wire fences, ditches thick with wildflowers, and the occasional stretch of old pine forest, their depths gleaming in that peculiar twilight all woods had in the sleepy heat of a Carolina summer. Cows grazed in the pastures between, their black bodies dotting the landscape with a carelessness that was somehow beatific. The Nissan rolled past them all, until Mike reached the stop sign some four miles from the gas station where Honey had made his acquaintance. An empty pasture graced one corner, its center rule by an old, cracked pecan long ago split by lightning.

"Through this crossroad, you said?"

"Yup. Just keep going 'bout another mile or so."

"You're the boss." Mike left the intersection and continued along the blacktop, his speed dropped slightly in case Honey's next directions came quickly. The scenery remained largely unchanged for a half mile past the crossroad--the pastures grew fewer and farther between, the woods separating them somehow deeper and darker--then the pastures ended altogether and the proper woods began. Mike watched with lazy curiosity as the trees rolled by, marking their age by the number of oaks and maples, and the great girth of those pines he could see growing at the edge of the woods. The road rolled between them, empty of all but the summer sunlight.

There aren't any power lines, he noted suddenly. It was a realization that both shocked and amused him; power lines running the length of a road were one of those things modern man took for granted. They were only conspicuous in their absence. *We're in the deep woods now, mate*, he thought, stifling a laugh. He truly doubted Honey would understand.

To their left, the trees pulled back from the road, giving grudging room to a tiny, ramshackle building and the cursory gravel of its empty front lot. Black letters had been carefully stenciled

above the plain white door: *March Farm Hunt Club*. He remembered seeing it on his first attempt to find the elusive creek, but he'd been so busy looking for a turn-off, the name of the place had failed to register in his memory as well.

"There's gonna be a dirt road up here on your right," Honey said.

If not for his companion, Mike would have missed the road--*again*, since apparently he had done just that on his first two or three tries past the crossroads. Just beyond the hunt club--within spitting distance, as the locals would say--a narrow, unpaved road branched off from the asphalt and vanished beneath the trees, its joining marked by nothing more notable than a battered stop sign, half-hidden by the warm shadows of the wood. Mike slowed his car and made the turn, taking that glorified hunting path at an easy pace to keep from battering the Nissan with the inevitable rocks popping up from beneath his tires. It wasn't as bad as it could have been; the road had probably been *all* gravel once, but the passage of too many pickups and as many years had washed the gravel from the tire ruts, leaving hard-packed red clay and a narrow strip of grass-choked crush-and-run between. Dusty oaks and silent pines crowded close on either side, their soft brown twilight spreading over the car and the road like a sigh.

"Keep goin'," Honey said agreeably.

The road wound through an endless colonnade of sentinel trees. It was a lonely place, Mike thought, but there was a forlorn beauty in that loneliness; and the car's slow pace allowed him to take in their surroundings with appreciation. North Carolina was still largely rural, but he hadn't known it still had places like this, places seemingly untouched by anyone but animals and the men who hunted them. And Mike didn't see them, either. Occasionally other paths snaked out of the forest, barred at their mouths by an old cattle gate or a length of rusted chain between trees, and once they passed a decaying tobacco barn, slowly losing its form to age and neglect and the strangling arms of a creeper vine. But that was all.

"There's a field comin' up here on the right," Honey said. "And just past that's the bridge. Park on the other side of it, if ya want, an' we'll walk down."

"All right." Mike looked to his left. Sure enough, the trees opened on a sunlit field, empty but for wild, yellow grasses that reminded him of wheat. He could see another tobacco barn slumped at its farthest edge, then the woods pulled themselves over the scene like a curtain. He looked ahead then, braking gently as the road dipped into a hollow--and there was the bridge before them, waiting in the gloom beneath the trees like an unwanted relic. It was paved, he noticed, and even marked with a double line, which struck him as odd given the gravel road both before and behind the bridge. He couldn't see the creek as they crossed it, but he pulled onto the shoulder as Honey Patterson had directed.

"Is this good?"

"Just right." Honey opened the door. "Kill that engine an' let's have a look."

"Hang on. Just let me get my camera." Mike turned off the car and palmed his keys, then reached over the back of the seat to retrieve his bag. He spent a moment stuffing the keys into the bag's front pocket as he got out of the car. Honey was already across the road, waiting for him patiently at what appeared to be the mouth of a worn, descending footpath. It dipped sharply from what he could see, vanishing beneath green leaves and dark branches. A hint of sunlight gleamed on litter near Honey's feet--a beer bottle, the light turning its glass to amber fire.

There was other trash nearby, now Mike had mind to look--spent shotgun casings, cigarette butts, a crushed container that had once held dirt and fishing worms. *The untouched woods--the redneck's trashcan*, he thought with mild disgust. So much for rural splendor.

He knew the bridge spanned the creek, even if he couldn't see it from his vantage beside the car, so he crossed to that side first. The bridge sat like a relic of civilization, incongruous amid the watchful, lonely silence of the surrounding woods. Dirt gritted beneath Mike's sneakers as he made his way across the asphalt to the mica-flecked, concrete bulwarks. They had looked solid enough from the car, not so much as he drew closer, a full four inches of space existing between the thick railing and the floor of the bridge. There were drainage holes as well, their diameter as thick as his wrist. Through both he could see green-tangled banks, dead trees, and the brown, sun-

dappled water of Swift Creek flowing smoothly below.

Mike had never had a head for heights, although his mother, God love her, had been worse. Just leaning over a balcony had made her faint, but it only made him mildly uncomfortable. He approached the edge of the bridge and braced one hand on its side, its concrete still warm from the sun straggling past the trees, and thrilled a little in the familiar nervousness rushing through his gut. Below him, Swift Creek was muddy and deep, the rapidity of its current visible where it swirled past a tangle of dead branches at its center--just an ancient loss from some long ago, forgotten storm. The water rushed through the wood, chuckling softly to itself. There was no brightness to the sound. It was the soft cackle of a senile old man.

There was no mill to be seen, but Honey had indicated the path, so Mike assumed there was still farther to go. He lifted his camera and expanded the shot, taking in the whole of the creek that could be seen through the overhanging trees, then took a handful of pictures. He doubted any of them would be used unless he was lucky enough to get his story on the front page of the community section, but there was no telling what the life editor might want.

Mike left the bridge--not without a flicker of relief--and strode back to where Honey waited. The man hadn't changed his position; he seemed to wait with all the ponderous patience of the hard-packed dirt beneath his feet, dusty and endlessly unchangeable.

"You ready?" he drawled.

"Lead on," Mike replied, flapping a hand genially toward the path. Honey wheeled about and began stumping along, ducking slightly as he passed beneath the low-hanging trees. Mike followed, idly brushing away the mosquitoes that inevitably found him as they descended through the woods and neared the edge of the water.

Swift Creek became visible in fits and patches, its surface gleaming darkly through breaks in the trees. It was a prime fishing spot, Mike could see--in several places multiple paths had been worn through the ground cover and its carpet of dead leaves, and shallow cups of earth had been smoothed along the steeper portions of the creek's winding bank from probably generations

of fishermen's backsides. More trash could be seen there, half-hidden beneath the dried fall of years, but Mike could see past all that. His eyes were only for the creek, shallower here than it had been beneath the bridge, the water running clear in places over expanses of stones worn smooth. Somewhere a bird sang, a solemn liquid trill playing counterpoint to the creek's quiet laughter and the stillness of the wood.

"It's gorgeous," Mike said aloud.

Honey snorted, but it was a good-humored sound. "Yeah. Good fishin', too."

"I'll bet." Stepping closer and absently careful of the old, humped roots protruding from the banks, Mike raised his camera and began taking pictures. He shot several, adjusting for the light and the shift in angles, then gave Honey a nod. "So where's the mine?"

"We'll head towards the old mill first." Honey turned and started a slow, ambling descent down the bank. "Or what's left of it. Gonna have to wade a bit, maybe, but it's been dry for a while. Shouldn't be enough to get more'n the bottom of your shoes wet."

"I think I can handle that." Watching his step, Mike followed the older man along the creek, bending low as their path took them under the occasional branch. The water chuckled beside them in a score of secretive voices, running clear and no doubt cold over stones that glimmered like gold and old ivory in the sun. The creek widened after a short distance, fed by a tiny stream from their right, then suddenly the trees drew back, affording a broad view before the creek bent west and disappeared in the tangled gloom of the woods.

Mike glanced ahead and slowed his pace. "Hell. That's it, isn't it?"

"What's left of it," Honey said again.

Mike raised his camera. Ahead of them and past the widest part of the creek, the remains of an ancient dam could be seen. It had been almost as tall as him once, a great dark arm of stone that had braced itself against the waters of the creek for a mill that was long since gone. At some point, either man or nature had torn down its middle section, spilling huge, ragged chunks of rock into the creek as the water poured through to resume its course. And now the woods crept closer, its trees sheltering the dam in shadow and

cloaking its gray length in old leaves. It was a soft, rotting darkness even the summer sun couldn't penetrate.

"There's more of it up the bank here," Honey said patiently.

"All right. I'm coming." Mike studied the route ahead. The path Honey indicated led across the slender stream from the right. It was definitely shallow, but Mike could see greenish-black slime coating many of the smoothed rocks on the bottom, and his sneakers had a lousy tread. After a moment's pause, he palmed his camera and slid his bag off his shoulder, backtracking to a dry spot well away from the water. He dropped his satchel between two tree roots and left it there for safe-keeping. If he slipped and fell on his ass, at least only his clothes would get wet. And he figured he could keep his camera out of the water easily enough.

Honey crossed the brook and Mike hurried after him, stepping gingerly into the running water. The water barely crested the tops of his rubber soles, but sneakers weren't boots--the water seeped in regardless. He grimaced at the cold but kept going. As feared, the rocks were treacherously slick beneath his feet, but he managed to keep his balance by moving slowly and carefully across the stream bed, and soon he was climbing up the rolling bank on the other side. There, more evidence of the shattered mill remained. Massive blocks of crumbling masonry stood on the higher bank, bits of rusted iron poking from their sides in strange configurations, their purpose lost in the past. Here the woods had moved into a different stage of reclamation, the drifts of fallen leaves helped along by honeysuckle and trumpet creeper. Mike took another quick series of pictures, then followed Honey farther up the slope.

"And here's that mine you were lookin' for."

Mike crested the low rise, his steps slowing with surprise and pleasure. Hunkered low beneath the dark, spreading trees, a bulky shack of rusted tin and decaying timber squatted against the gloomy backdrop of the woods. The ground humped up behind it--Mike guessed that the shed was nothing more than a weather-hang guarding the old mine's entrance, and the mine itself had disappeared inside the hill. There had been a door once, but it had been boarded up at some time in the distant past, the planks long since grayed with

age and weather.

"Is it safe to go in?"

"Hell, naw." Honey hawked and spat to one side. "Probably won't be safe when it was still bein used--sure as hell ain't safe now."

"Yeah, I'll bet." Not disappointed in the least--actually going *inside* the old mine was more adventure than he cared to experience on his current salary--Mike busied himself with taking more pictures and turning over words in his mind. *Gold mines. The words conjure images of forty-niners with shouldered pickaxes, striding off to make their fortune in majestic California. But you might be surprised to learn that American gold was first discovered in North Carolina--*

"Can I get closer?"

"Don't see why not." Honey shrugged. "Just watch your step."

Mike focused the scope of his camera, snagging images of the boarded-up doorway, the rusted tin, the way wildflowers and scrub grass had taken hold at the old shack's feet. He made his way around the bank side of the structure, with an eye to possibly climbing the slope to get a view from the top of the shed, and from that angle took another shot of the bank itself, tumbling its silent way through the surrounding trees to the sun-dappled creek below--

Mike paused. There was something odd on the camera's digital screen. Something small and pale and moving, down by the water. Frowning slightly, he adjusted the lens to bring the object into clearer focus.

Defining its outlines sent an unaccountable chill ghosting over his skin.

You wanna watch out for the wash lady, okay?

It was a woman. Mike was reasonably sure of that although he could only see her from the back. She was slender, narrow-shouldered, with damp, black hair straggling down the back of her loose gray dress. Kneeling on the far side of the slick-pebbled brook they had crossed to reach the mine, her unseen face toward the bend of the creek, she bent forward at the waist and seemed to work at something in the water. Squinting a little, Mike lowered his camera and tried to see what she was doing, but all he could make out was a long, white *something* drifting in the current from where the woman knelt.

Honey was eyeing him from the edge of the slope. "Whatcha lookin' at?"

"Nothing much. Looks like we've got company, that's all."

"Company?" Honey's face was as impassive as ever. Turning slightly, he followed Mike's line of sight. "Who? An' where? I don't see nothin'."

"Down by the creek bank. It's a woman--"

"A woman--"

"Yeah. You probably can't see from where you're standing." Mike started down the embankment, approaching Honey's vantage point. Sure enough, the woman slowly dipped from sight behind the angle of the slope. "She's down there, though."

"Local?"

"I would assume. She's down there where I left my bag."

"We probably oughta head back, then. Don't want no one messin' with your stuff." Honey cast a glance at the sky and sucked his teeth. His casual look remained, but something about his stance--maybe something in his eyes--struck Mike as slightly *off*.

He said nothing, only nodded, and when Honey began his slow, easy pace down the slope, Mike followed. They took it at an angle, cutting across the little rise to meet the shallow brook they had crossed, the sunlit trees temporarily blocking the woman from view. Mike strained to hear her as well, but there were no sounds except the splash of the creek, and even that seemed subdued. There was no birdsong, either, and his sudden and unexplainable feeling of disquiet grew. Grimacing, Mike doggedly followed his guide across the brook, then they turned a sharp right and climbed a narrow arm of the bank to where the woman should have been.

Only she wasn't. The bank was empty.

"She was right here."

"Ain't here now." Honey gazed out over the water. "Maybe she saw ya an' ran off. Girl ain't got no business bein down here anyway. Not alone."

"Why's that?" Mike crossed to the old oak where he'd left his bag.

"Hunters. Guys fishin. Never know what some good ole boy might do when he sees a woman by herself where she ought not to be, an' he's had a few beers in'm."

"Seems kind of sexist if you ask me..." Mike trailed off, a line of concern forming on his brow. "Hey, have you seen my bag? I left it right here." He scanned the ground at the foot of the oak, then circled the entire tree. "Right here, I swear I did, but now I can't seem to find it. It didn't just walk off--"

"You sure you got the right tree?" Honey left the bank and wandered past, giving the grassy bank and its tangle of roots a cursory inspection.

"Positive. I wouldn't just set the damn thing down without looking first." A bad feeling settled in Mike's belly; his keys had been in that bag. "It's got my papers in it. My wallet, my phone, *and* my keys. Damn near everything but my camera." He glanced up sharply. "You don't think that woman took it, do you? The one I saw? She was right near here."

Honey paused. Mike saw a shadow flicker behind the man's eyes, a shadow that only unsettled him further. "No," Honey said slowly, shaking his head. "No, I don't reckon she did. I can't imagine why she would."

"Well, *somebody* took it!"

"Now just calm down, mister. We'll have a better look around, all right? Trees all look alike after awhile--trust me, you'd know what I was talkin about if you'd ever gotten yourself lost in the woods." Honey took his hands from his pockets and started moving, pacing the creek bank in small circles as his eyes continued to scan the ground. "You say your keys are in there, so we can't get out of here without findin that bag. So start lookin'."

Mike muttered worriedly but set to as well, trying to ignore the faint edge to Honey's voice--and his sudden certainty that Honey was more worried than he let on.

* * *

The sun was sinking behind the woods by the time Honey gave up the search, and by then Mike could no longer dismiss his guide's agitated state as purely imagination. Honey didn't seem like an excitable man, but something was beginning to spook him, and it was becoming rapidly apparent that Honey wanted to go, and go now. He had grown gruff and short in his answers, and kept casting sober glances over his shoulders at the

woods and the murmuring creek, glances that became more frequent as the sun set and the shadows lengthened across the fast-flowing water.

"We need to be gettin on," Honey said at last. He wouldn't meet Mike's eyes. "We've been lookin for awhile now, an' we ain't turned up a thing--"

"I'm aware of that, but we're not going anywhere without those keys."

"I'm not stayin here after dark."

Something in Honey's tone made Mike lift his head. Honey was standing a short distance away, arms folded over his chest, his chin tipped down like a man in thought.

"So what are you planning to do?" Mike armed sweat away from his forehead. "Walk? We're an easy five miles from the crossroads, so you're talking at *least* that before we'd even find somebody with a phone we could use. It's another four or five past that to Thompson's Store. I'll walk if I have to--" He turned and went back to searching, although the effort had grown half-hearted. "But I'd rather not. It's getting dark, like you said. I'd rather find my bag."

"You're not gonna find it."

"It didn't just walk away, Mr. Patterson. It's still here somewhere--"

"No, it ain't. It didn't walk away, but it ain't here *either*, an' I done told you I ain't stayin after dark."

"What is it with you people? Just like that man back at the gas station. What is it? The creek?" Mike flung out his arm in exasperation. "It's just some damn *water*--"

"Naw, it ain't the creek," Honey interrupted quietly. "But I ain't stayin here. An' I ain't walkin no four, five miles neither. Less than a mile back's the hunt club."

Mike shot him a glance. "There wouldn't be anyone up there this time of the year."

"Maybe not, but they'd have a phone. I can bust a window if need be."

Mike rolled that over in his mind. He stopped his aimless searching and gave Honey Patterson his full attention. The shadows had lengthened as they argued, turning the creek to a dark, transparent gray that whispered its way over the stones. The last light of the setting sun touched the tree-tops on the opposite bank, painting them in fiery gold. Downstream, the creek flowed beneath the

bridge where his car was still parked, the angle of the sunset already bathing its length of steel and concrete in deepening dusk. It had an ominous look at twilight, like the gate to some gloomy underworld. The river Styx, only missing its Charon.

What Honey said made sense--there was no doubt the hunt club would have a phone, and even if their luck failed and it didn't, it was better than wandering the creek bank after dark, tripping over tree roots and God knows what else long after the last light was gone. He couldn't very well go on searching in the dark. Still, there was some daylight left, and Mike was reluctant to leave just yet. He supposed he hoped, on some dim level, that the woman would come back--for he had no doubts now that it was the woman who had stolen his bag.

"You go," Mike said at last, resigned. "I want to stick around a bit longer, look around a bit more. And somebody should stay with the car."

Honey nodded and spit reflectively to one side. "Yeah, all right. You do what you need to do. I should be back shortly. I plan on givin' my brother a call. If he's home, he can give us a ride outta here, an' you can get someone to pick up your car in the mornin'."

"All right, sounds good."

"Yeah." Honey cast a glance at their surroundings, then nodded again and turned to go. "You look after yourself while I'm gone, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"I think I'll manage."

Honey stumped away through the trees. Mike listened to the sound of the man's retreat, feeling odd and unsettled as the last thuds of his heavy boots faded into the woods. Some instinct made him lift his eyes to the bridge, and after a few seconds of waiting he saw Honey striding across, a blurred gray shadow among the deeper shadows of the coming twilight. Mike shifted his weight on the creek bank, lifting his hand in a wave he didn't expect to see returned, but Honey raised his hand as well. Then he was gone, retracing their path up the lonely dirt road. Mike was left alone, standing in nervous silence beside the creek.

He went back to searching, but the endeavor didn't last long. The sun set late in the last dregs of summer, but the creek was bordered by woods on every side. Impenetrable woods, that blocked

off the light of the fading sunset and plunged the creek course into gloom. After his third time tripping over unseen roots, Mike abruptly gave up the search, writing off consciously what his more instinctual half had already given up as a bad job. He couldn't see a damn thing; his last stumble had nearly tipped him into the creek. It wasn't deep until it reached the bridge, but he didn't want to add *wet to the knees* to the current list of seriously-fucked-up-shit.

Mike stared at the bastard creek, then swore softly under his breath and turned toward the path. If he was going to get out of there, he needed to do it now, while there was still enough miserly light left to actually *find* the path. He pushed past the sentinel oaks, tripping again and stubbing his toes, but by following the gradual rise of the bank, he managed to find the path without falling on his face. It glimmered against the dusk, a lighter strip of beaten earth leading up and toward the road. Mike blew out his breath in a sigh and started up, and soon the incoherent babble of the creek faded into silence behind him, replaced by the whispering of wind in the trees and the occasional, self-conscious trill of an unseen bird.

The woods hunkered close on either side. Mike had never been in the woods after dark; he saw now how easy it was to get lost after nightfall in all that quiet. He had the path before him, but without it the woods were so much formless shadow, broken only by the lighter smear of an occasional birch as it loomed out of the growing darkness. Things rustled in the undergrowth as he passed and then grew still. Mike quickened his pace, suddenly keen to be free of the trees, bag or no bag.

The ground leveled out at the top of the path, and he spotted his car in the last light of day. Honey was nowhere to be seen. Mike looked down the dirt road all the same, half-hoping to see the man returning, but the bridge was empty and dark. Shadowed even in sunlight by the close, overhanging trees, it was a brooding tunnel by twilight. The dirt road stretched beyond it and vanished into the gloom.

It was an uncomfortable thought, waiting there in the growing darkness for Honey to return, but the car doors were unlocked and it was better than nothing. Mike slid behind the steering wheel, the last heat of the day surrounding him

like a stuffy cloak. He rolled down the window by hand, then closed the door and sat back with a disgusted sigh.

Night drew black wings around him.

The window didn't stay down long. Mosquitoes rose from the creek, biting him half a dozen times before he finally relented and rolled up the window. Then the late summer heat, still potent after sunset, closed in on the stuffy confines of the car with a silent menace. Mike shifted uncomfortably in his seat, miserably lamenting the loss of his bag and the ability to turn on the air conditioner. That, and he'd had a pair of gym shorts rolled up in the bottom of the tote. His jeans stuck to his legs, his feet were itchy and far too warm inside his creek-dampened shoes.

Mike ran sticky fingers through his hair, tossing it back in a sweaty tangle--

The sudden thump on the passenger window startled him into a shout.

"What the *fuck*--?!" His heart hammering in his chest, Mike whipped around to catch sight of Honey's pale, staring face at the window. He was a ghostly shape beyond the glass, his mouth working soundlessly as he scrabbled at the door. A heartbeat later, he had gotten it open. He collapsed inside, his chest heaving, and slammed it shut after him. The lock clicked home.

"What the hell happened?!"

"You didn't find your keys," Honey panted.

"I wouldn't still be sitting here if I did. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothin'. Nothin'. Lock your door."

Mike did as asked, casting a nervous glance through the windows as he did so. The night was empty, as brooding and watchful as the woods had been in daylight. There was nothing to see through the windshield but the shape of the trees silhouetted against the marginally lighter sky. They swayed in an unfelt breeze.

He looked at Honey, hunched and rocking in the seat beside him.

"What happened?" he asked again, his voice quiet but no less intense. "What's out there?" He had a vague notion that some nutjob was wandering the woods--a hitchhiker, perhaps, or just a local with a crappy sense of humor. But Honey only shook his head and refused to answer. Feeling more than a little frustrated, as much by Honey's ridiculous reaction as by being trapped in the

car until morning--and with a companion who was smelling less than fragrant at the moment--Mike swore and gripped the steering wheel with both hands. He stared through the windshield at the swelling night with sweat trickling down his back--

Something pale flickered in the mirror.

Mike's eyes darted toward the reflection, his mouth gone suddenly dry. *Someone was standing behind his car.* It was too dark to make them out clearly, but there was no denying the shape of a person, pale and ghostly in the gloom. The figure stood almost perfectly centered in the rear window, as if waiting on the side of the road, then he watched it shift and glide silently past, vanishing into the darkness of the bridge lurking at their back.

"Mr. Patterson." Mike realized his voice was shaking. "Mr. Patterson, there's something out there--"

"Oh, Christ," Honey babbled, rocking faster. "Oh Christ oh Christ *oh Christ*--"

"Mr. Patterson--"

"Can you hear it? It's callin'. It's callin' for me."

"What? I can't hear a thing--!"

"*It comes. Oh, it's comin'...*"

"Goddamn it, *stop!* Christ!" Mike smacked Honey backhanded across the chest. "Will you just fucking *stop*? There's nothing out there--"

(*nothing but the pale thing*)

"--and you're freaking me out, you asshole!" He looked through the windshield again, taking a bizarre and terrified comfort in the endless dark of the trees. *Nothing out there, nothing out there but night.* But even as his brain babbled, desperately trying not to give in to Honey's panic, his heart froze its beat as something white moved in front of the car.

"Jesus H. Christ, what is that thing--?!"

(*watch out for the wash lady, okay*)

It couldn't be, it made no sense, but the thing gliding soundlessly across the night-shadowed road bore a resemblance that couldn't be denied. Slender and pale, it did not shine, but seemed to lose its sickly white in the lecherous grip of the surrounding darkness. Black hair streamed past its shoulders and down its back, stringy and seemingly damp. And as Mike watched in shock, the woman-thing turned her head, meeting his stare

with a dreadful solemnity that turned the blood in his veins to ice.

It has no eyes. Christ, IT HAS NO EYES!

Honey gave voice to low-pitched, keening moan. Mike shrank back in his seat, his eyes goggling at the gaunt-faced apparition as she slipped across the road. Her lips were shriveled and bloodless, slightly parted as if she might speak, and above her thin nose the eye sockets were completely empty. Her corpse-gaze seemed to lock on his, freezing him for a moment of time, then she turned away. She vanished into the shadows at the head of the path--the path that led down, down, to the lunatic, muttering chuckles of the hidden creek.

"Jesus," Mike moaned. "What was that..."

"She's coming," Honey whispered, wild-eyed with terror. "She's coming for me."

"Who, goddamn it? What was that thing?"

But Honey didn't answer. He was keening--a high pitched, singsong whine. Staring senselessly through the windshield toward the shadowed woods where the woman-thing had disappeared, Honey began yanking at the door handle, pulling and clicking with idiot repetition before he seemed to realize that it was locked. Before Mike could think to stop him, he'd unlocked the door and opened it to the night. It brought a draught of cooler air inside, stinking of the creek, damp and heavy with rot.

"Mr. Patterson! Hey, hang on--!"

If Honey heard, he gave no sign. Still making that half-mad, sobbing whine deep in the pit of his throat, the man tumbled from the car and to his feet. He left the door standing open--Mike caught a glimpse of silent tree trunks and the scrub-grass growing on the shoulder--then Honey slipped and staggered his way toward the road. He passed in front of the car, moving jerkily like a puppet on epileptic strings.

Mike's heart was pounding in his ears. He'd never been so afraid, so utterly certain that the *last* thing anyone should do was follow the pale woman into the dark. "Mr. Patterson!" he shouted hoarsely, his voice failing him. "What in the fuck are you *doing*?!"

Honey reached the other side of the road. For a moment Mike could still see him, a lighter shadow bobbing and swaying among the deeper shadow of the trees, then his figure descended as

the creek path sloped downward and the darkness swallowed him whole.

And then, *oh then*, the screaming began.

Mike cried out in tandem, his hands seizing on the steering wheel in an ecstasy of unthinking terror. Shriek after tortured shriek rose from the hidden woods, carrying loud and clear on the night air that seeped through the open door. That door open to the night and the screams broke Mike's frozen terror at last; he lurched for it and grabbed the handle, slamming it shut a second afterwards and locking it with trembling hands. It was cowardice, pure and simple, and guilt boiled up in his throat, but Mike couldn't bring himself to reopen that door, no more than he could consider getting out and plunging after Honey in rescue. *He got out of the car, not me*, his brain babbled. *He got out of the car, not me...*

The screams rose to a bloodcurdling pitch, muffled by steel and glass, then the sound was cut off as neatly as shutting off a light. Silence descended on the woods--even the night insects had ceased their song. There was nothing but darkness and the sound of Mike's frightened breathing. *Something's out there. Jesus. JESUS.*

But nothing made a sound. A moment later, the crickets tuned up and resumed their shrill, monotonous tune. All was dark and peaceful, as if the screams had never been.

* * *

Mike stayed awake through most of the lonely night. For a time he remained in the driver's seat, immobile with shock, staring into the blackness spilling over the hood and stretching endlessly in every direction, but after awhile it became too much, the constant waiting and surety that *something* would come crawling up out of the woods, dragging itself hand over hand to slap dead and clammy palms at the too-thin glass between them. He'd lain down then, climbing uncomfortably into the back of the car with a spare coat from the floorboards thrown over his face in spite of the heat. Stifling in the darkness was better than seeing anything that might come to the windows, and if he couldn't see, he could pretend there was nothing out there.

Still, every rustle and ominous thump outside the car made his stomach clench and his heart

thunder in his chest, until eventually exhaustion claimed him, and the night sounds faded until there was nothing left but the whisper of his own fitful dreams. When Mike awoke, he could see a gray light within the shelter of his coat. He lifted his head, peering out at the world, and found the interior of the Nissan lit with the pale, cool light of morning.

Mike sat up with a start, his eyes wide and grimed with sleep as he stared at the dreamy stillness of the woods around him. No longer threatening, the trees still appeared to wait, their arms of black and dusty green stretched overhead in supplication. The dirt road was empty, as was the bridge behind the car and the low-slung path that vanished beneath the trees. Mike didn't look long at the path. A deeper darkness seemed to lurk there still, black and brooding as shadow-light caught by the trees.

But there was nothing abnormal to be seen, and he had to piss.

Mike hesitated, one sweaty hand poised on the lock, then he exhaled sharply and opened the door in one go. Stumbling out of the vehicle, stiff from sleeping like a contortionist in the back seat, he left the door standing open and unzipped right there. The arc of urine leaving his body had never felt so good. It splashed against hard-packed dirt and left little runnels that hurried in the direction of the bridge, streams Mike followed with a nervous eye as he finished his business and shook off. A bundle of green caught his attention--a bulky thing, laying propped against the concrete guard.

Mike zipped up.

It was *khaki* green.

Jesus Christ, it was his *bag*.

Relief flooded through him, warring with shock, and he stumbled toward the bridge in a hurry, snatching up the bag and flipping it open with trembling fingers. He pawed through its contents in disbelief. Everything was there--his phone, his keys, his wallet and both of his notebooks, the latter only slightly warped from last night's damp.

Mike lifted his head and stared at his surroundings.

There was no sign of whoever had brought the bag to the bridge, and he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that *he* hadn't brought it there, and

it certainly hadn't walked by itself. There was no sign of Honey, either. He was alone on the Swift Creek bridge, bathed in sweat turned clammy in the cool of a summer morning. There was no wind to stir the trees that overhung the road, and below the bridge, the water gurgled with a muted sound. Mike followed the path of that smooth-flowing, tea-brown water with uncertain eyes, marking the distant shallows. Somewhere beyond it, lost behind the wall of trees, the dark and broken bulk of the dam lay waiting. He could take the path that dipped toward its bank and search for Mr. Patterson--

Mike had clutched his keys so tightly their metal edges cut into his hand. Unable to face the silent woods, he nearly ran to his car, hating himself for his fear but helpless against it. He would come back with help, and *then* they would search the woods and the creek for Honey Patterson. But damned if he was going down in those haunted woods by himself.

* * *

Mike knew he should have called the police as soon as he'd found his phone, but something--some small sense of self-preservation where his ego was concerned, perhaps--kept him from making the call until he had reached something approximating civilization. He'd had pranks played on him before--good Lord, college was rife with them--and in the increasing light of day it was easier than ever to convince himself that that was what it had been, nothing more or less than an elaborate prank played by back country yahoos on the unsuspecting city boy.

He decided to make Thompson's Grocery his first stop. He'd find that bearded man behind the register, or someone who knew him, and ask about Honey Patterson. He'd find out the man had come back in the night, that he'd walked to the hunt club and broken a window, just as he'd said, made a phone call and vanished home, laughing up his sleeve all the while.

Mike drove away from Swift Creek, taking the bridge and the long dirt road as fast as he dared. When he reached the stop sign and turned on the blacktop, he kept his eyes averted from the mirror and the opening in the woods behind him. It felt too much like the *woods* had eyes-

-brooding, knowing eyes--that marked him well as they watched him go, silently promising they would meet again. Mike sped up when he hit the main road, his breath coming easier as the empty woods faded and the rolling farmland began.

Five minutes later, he pulled into the gravel yard before Thompson's Gas and Grocery, and found it empty but for the towheaded, pony-tailed girl he'd met before. Mike eased the Nissan past the girl and parked a short distance from the pumps, while casting a curious glance at the store's front door. It was closed, a hand-lettered sign saying as much in the window. A blind had been pulled down to the top of the notice. The little girl was crouched at the edge of the lot as she'd been the last time he'd seen her--a thin, waif-like child in her faded sundress, the sunlight shining on her hair. She was making sand pictures on the blacktop again, but she glanced at him over her shoulder at him as he killed the car's engine, her face as solemn as ever.

Mike opened the door and slowly got out of the car. She looked up again at the crunch of his footsteps, and watched him close the distance between them. With less than a foot to go, she abruptly went back to her drawing, the sand pouring from the neck of her bottle with a whisper.

"Hey," Mike said, somewhat lamely.

"Hey." Her voice was soft. A sand-spiral sighed across the blacktop.

"The store. Does it always close on Sundays?"

She made some small sound in the affirmative, then met his eyes once more. "Did you go down to the creek?" she asked.

Mike felt a unpleasant jolt in his belly, as if he'd done something wrong and she knew about it. Her eyes regarded him--a child sibyl reading fortunes in the sand. "Yeah, I did," he said softly. "Mr. Patterson went with me." He paused, and then hurried on, unable to stop himself. "You told me to watch out for the 'wash lady.' What were you talking about?"

"The wash lady," the little girl echoed, her voice taking on a dreamlike quality. "She lives by the creek, or she did. They say she's a ghost-woman now. She washes the clothes of the dead."

Mike crouched down beside her. "What dead?"

"The ones who'll be dead soon." She resumed

her drawing. "If you see her, it means she's coming. She washes your clothes in the creek... and then she comes for you."

"But I was the one who saw her..." *Not Honey. Me.* The words were out of his mouth before he could stop them. It made no sense, and even speaking the protest aloud had a surreal quality. he couldn't shake, but the fact remained--*whatever* he had seen, Honey had not, yet Honey had disappeared--

Or did he see it?

"I was the one who saw her," Mike repeated, stronger this time, as if saying it with determination would cause the world to make sense again--would expand it from this tiny prophetess drawing her sigils in the sand. "I did."

The girl looked up, expressionless. "It's only a story."

"Only a story. Christ." Mike lifted his head and stared at the empty yard, each mica-flecked bit of gravel catching his eyes like diamonds in the sun. He turned abruptly on his heel and strode away, leaving the girl to her strangeness at the side of the road. *Probably inbred. They say shit like that doesn't happen around here, but God only knows--*

Someone had to be around. Even on a Sunday, it seemed impossible that the only convenience store on the whole twelve miles of Thompson's Store Road would be closed to everyone. Besides, *someone* had to be watching the girl at the road.

He walked quickly past the gas pumps and the ticking hulk of his car, then headed around the store and towards the back. A shelter had been built against the side, its cool and shadowy space guarded by weeds and stacked with empty drink crates and a rusting handtruck. Beyond that the gravel rolled to the edge of the yard, where a thin boundary of tall grass separated the store from the broad expanse of a soybean field. It stretched to the rim of the world, it seemed, except for the dark line of trees at its opposite end.

Mike rounded the corner and stopped. Someone was there, all right. A figure slouched on the store's back stair, where the rear door gave on the gentle slope of the yard. It was a man, as near as Mike could tell, sitting propped with his back against the door, his arms folded across his thighs and slightly bent as if his stomach pained him. There was a trucker's cap pulled low over his

face, but he seemed familiar nonetheless.

A rusty caw split the summer morning. Mike glanced toward the soybean field, where a trio of crows were picking at the edge of the grass, stalking ponderously along like three fat priests with their hands clasped behind their backs. One took wing and fluttered a few feet as he appeared around the side of the store, but apparently he didn't hold their interest. They went back to their raucous grumbling, and Mike turned back to the man still sitting on the steps.

"Excuse me," Mike called out, the fake cheer in his voice striking a jangling discord in his ears. "I'm looking for someone. I was here yesterday, and I--"

He trailed off with a furrowed brow. The man had not moved or even flinched at the sudden sound of Mike's intrusion. As Mike drew closer, he began to understand why the man looked so familiar. His clothes, at least--a white T-shirt, grimed with dirt, and ancient jeans ending in the seam-sprung clodhoppers his dad had called 'shit-kicking boots.' Mike had spent the previous afternoon beside those clothes, following the man that wore them along the lonely banks of Swift Creek... and that night, he had watched that white shirt disappear, smothered in the dark of the grasping trees, his screams shut off like a light--

"Mr. Patterson?" His voice was stronger than he felt--he was suddenly sure he'd been fucked over, and any second the inbred bastard would pop up from the steps with a lunatic's gap-toothed grin and shout *Boo! Aww, man... I wish ya could see your face...!* This close, he could see Honey's gingery beard jutting over his chest like a hank of rusty steel wool. His trucker's hat shadowed his face, but there was no mistaking him, or the odor of tobacco and sweat that seemed to be permanently ground into his clothes. And there seemed to be another smell as well--a *damp* smell, like old basements or wood gone to rot.

(or river mud)

"Mr. Patterson?" Mike caught stuttered glimpses of the man, each tiny picture encapsulating a detail that came together in a disquieting whole. His white shirt, wet and transparent, the red-brown hairs of his arm showing through the cotton. Denim on his legs, dark blue with damp, water pooling around his heels. Scattered droplets could be seen clinging to his beard. Some voice

bellowed inside Mike's head, telling him to stop, to leave it alone--to get back inside his dented Nissan and simply drive back to Rocky Mount--

With nerveless fingers, Mike pulled the cap from Honey's head. He had a moment to register the man's pale face, the water glistening on skin gone clammy and colorless as a fish's belly, his mouth agape, his tongue swollen and poking its tip between his ruined teeth like a bit of discarded liver. But his eyes--they were rolled upwards, pinning Mike where he stood, wide and frozen in an expression of mind-breaking horror.

You left me, those eyes accused. You LEFT me, city-boy.

The corpse sagged, its balance shifted, and tumbled from the steps, landing with a sickening, soggy thump on the grass. And Mike began to scream, silencing the crows and shattering the sleepy quiet of a summer's morning.

THEY HAD GOAT HEADS

D. HARLAN WILSON



Illustration by Brandon Duncan

THEY HAD GOAT HEADS

By D. Harlan Wilson

They had goat heads . . .

I could see down the hallway from the bed. It stretched two miles into the forest. My mother served me a bowl of vegetable soup. The door was open. I wanted to close it.

The TV turned on. A goat walked back and forth across the screen. Then a tall, thin man entered the picture and slaughtered the goat with an axe. The camera zoomed into the man's face. He gazed down at the carcass, eyes wide with terror, mouth slowly opening into a chemical scream . . .

The TV turned off.

A brick crashed through the window. There was a note tied to it. I picked it up and read the note.

"They have goat heads," it read . . . I looked out the window. An astronaut in a bubble helmet and orange spacesuit waved at me, then boarded his shuttle. Liftoff. The motel shook. The shuttle rose like a flag, gaining speed and altitude until it disappeared into the clouds.

Thunder. The clouds flashed, flickered . . .

The shuttle fell out off the sky, smoldering . . . It crashed onto its launch pad and burst into flames. The motel shook . . .

A door creaked open and the astronaut climbed out. He staggered into a tree and bounced backwards. He looked at the wreckage. He looked at me and took off his bubble helmet. He had a goat head.

I drew the curtain.

Somebody in the ceiling had attached marionette strings to my mother's joints. They had also stapled her lips onto her cheeks. Her teeth were two rows of golf tees. She made desperate sucking noises as the puppeteer compelled her to dust the room and vacuum the carpet.

I heard bleating in the hallway. I told my mother I would be right back.

I shut the door behind me.

For two miles, all of the doors were closed, and I didn't see anyone except a meter maid who tried to take my pulse with a lightning rod. Then I saw an open door.

Room 3,401D. I heard cheering inside.

I went inside.

They wanted to play basketball in the boxing ring. Hoops loomed over the ring's turnbuckles. The coaches screamed at each other. The referees ran back and forth and bounced off of the ropes, testing their resilience. The players held hands and prayed. They all had goat heads.

I noticed my old college roommate in the audience. He was sitting next to my ex-girlfriend, making out with her. He pretended not to see me . . . I walked up two flights of bleachers and sat by myself.

A referee blew a whistle. Tipoff . . .

My mother lumbered into 3,401D. The puppeteer maneuvered her into the boxing ring, scaring away the *dramatis personae*. A microphone descended from the ceiling on a thin length of cord and she gurgled into it.

They played the bagpipes . . . I stood and walked downstairs and left 3,401D. The crowd broke into hysterics as I shut the door . . . and went back to my room . . .

I got lost.

I found the lobby. A motel clerk asked to see my room key. I didn't have it. He tried to have me arrested. I ran away.

I got lost . . .

Time lapse of bellhops and concierges and janitors racing up and down the hallways . . . silhouette of the motel set against a blazing horizon. I hadn't taken a nap since infancy. All I wanted was nap.

I crawled the rest of the way . . .

My mother was sleeping in my bed. She looked like a dead seal . . . No sign of the puppeteer, and the marionette strings were gone. Open wounds covered her body where the strings had been ripped free. And her lips had been cut off . . . I shook her awake and asked her to leave. She made a deflating sound.

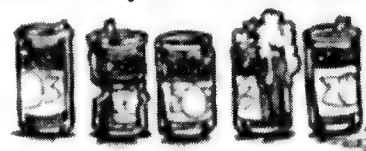
Through the window I saw them, thousands of them, tying notes to bricks . . .



Street Girls (1975) - (d) Michael Miller

This is one of the principal reasons you buy Brutarian: to discover obscure exploitation flicks like *Street Girls*. "Just how obscure is *Street Girls*," you ask? Well, you can't find an entry for it in either of the Psychotronic guides. Nor can you find reviews on Wikipedia, The Internet Film Database, or RottenTomatoes.com. Surprising, as the screenplay was written by Barry Levinson. Maybe not so surprising, as Mr. Levinson more than likely would, given his druthers, prefer that *Street Girls* stay buried in the dustbin of cinematic history, as *The Natural* this ain't. What is "natural" are the breasts on display here. They come in all shapes and sizes, with nary a silicon-injected or implanted specimen in the bunch. God, Ozzy had almost forgotten what women were supposed to look like until spending a drunken two hours with this amusing and incoherent potboiler. And for that, Mr. Fide gives thanks. As well as for the prideful parading of full bushes, that is, women as women, not as little girls. Wrap your Johnson around that, if you dare, and then pop open the first can in the six pack and prepare to be overwhelmed by a brutish world only loosely resembling reality as you know it. The setting is Eugene, Oregon, but don't look for two hundred foot tall pine trees or honey bears in Miller's blasted, blanded, and banal settings. We're in Hell, a necropolis where conversation has no purpose, sex brings no pleasure, and everyone is waiting for Death to punch their ticket to oblivion. What story there is, centers on the owner and denizens of a strip bar and their abuse of the women working there. Yet even within this sleazy demimondaine, we are overwhelmed by the sordid nudity, inconsequential dialogue, and suffocating air of depravity. Despite repeated attempts to interject two parallel and intersecting stories - a father searching for his runaway daughter, a lesbian agonizing over the betrayal of a lover - it's all to little effect. Too little and too, too late, because by the time you even realize there is a story,

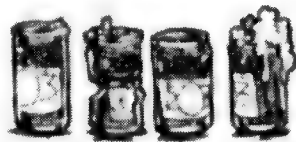
you're already thinking of suicide. Or something worse. The "worse" that is out there. Waiting for you. Watching. Waiting. Best stay inside. You go ahead, tough guy. Take a walk down these mean streets. But you've been warned: *Street Girls* will get you bad. Maybe, though, that's good.



All The Colors Of The Dark aka They're Coming To Get You (1972) - (d) Sergio Martino

A wonderful giallo that is giallo in name only. Giallo: an Italian take on American pulp fiction, particularly the hard-boiled school. Distinguished by a love for brutal, barbaric serial killing. In extended sequences which seemingly go on forever. With mise en scenes which would drive haute home design magazines green with envy. In which the killer is usually masked in black (an homage to *Black Mask* magazine, publisher of Chandler and Gardner and Hammett), sports black leather gloves, and carries a particularly sharp blade. Martino turns the genre's tropes on their head here while dazzling us with his almost surreal emphasis on high-intensity primary colors, a stubborn refusal to adhere to conventional narrative structures, and a prowling, restless camera which makes it impossible, at times, for the viewer to determine who is doing what to whom. As it should be, as Martino opens with a dream wherein a deranged, rotting-toothed granny stabs a beautiful naked woman on a blindingly-white Daliesque set. A dream, dreamed by the dreamy Edwige Fenech whose dreams get weirder. More lovely. More horrible. Fenech is Jane, the newly married wife of, well, a man who may or may not be her husband. We're not sure. In some scenes, Fenech calls him her husband. In others,

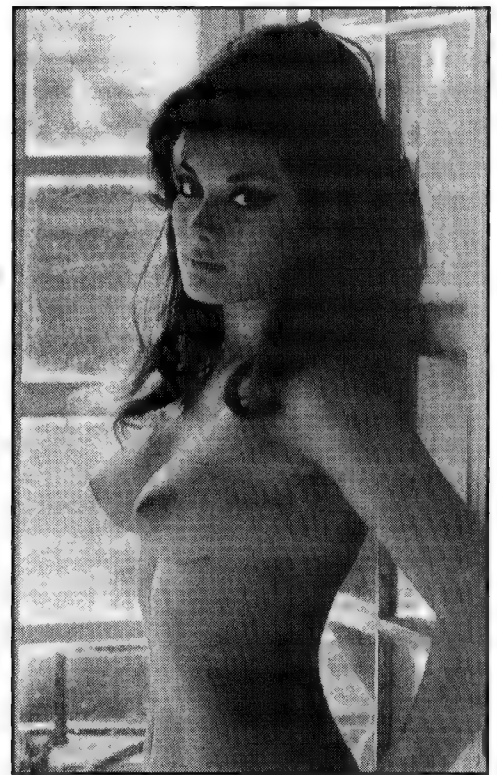
she calls him her lover. We don't know what her lover/ husband does or whether he wants this nightmare, which is recurring, to stop. He gives her vitamins and frowns on her visitation to a psychiatrist. We think the dream has something to do with her mother getting murdered. The psychiatrist asks Fenech to stop taking the vitamins and take his pills. The nightmares continue, and Fenech meets a beautiful blonde in her apartment building who befriends her, and later seeks to convince her a Satanic cult can sure her. Is any of this real? Are the dreams the result of witnessing her mother's murder or Fenech losing her baby in a car accident? Is that man outside the window, behind the door, on the sidewalk, her husband or her mother's murderer? Why would the sister recommend a psychiatrist if she is a priestess in the aforementioned cult? Questions on top of questions. Enigmas wrapped inside shadowy mysteries. With no clues. With everyone suspect. Meaning no one can be a suspect. While we struggle to pierce the veils obscuring the real, we witness murder or murders, a ritual gang rape of Fenech, Fenech luxuriating in her alabaster nakedness, and Fenech running to and from the husband and the sister and the psychiatrist and people she may or may not have met. And in the end, it's all too much, and we just don't know what to say. Or think.



The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh (1970) - (d) Sergio Martino

The preternaturally comely Edwige Fenech stars as the titular character, first name Julie, and whose vice apparently has something to do with an inability to keep her clothes on. But seriously folks, she's Mrs Wardh, a young, hedonistic playgirl recently married to middle-aged businessman Neil, an investment broker far more concerned with his stocks than in making love to his new bride. A shame and a predilection likely to have him wearing the horns, as Julie unbeknownst to Neil, has given herself to him so that she can free herself from Jean, her sadomasochistic lover. We know Jean is into S&M because we're shown a flashback in which Jean beats Julie, then forces himself on her - it's not rape if you open your mouth when kissing. Another flash, and Jean is showering Julie with shards of a broken champagne bottle, cutting her nude torso with one of the glass fragments, and again, savagely taking her. We're never sure whether any of this happened. All we know, is that Julie is terribly unhappy with her hubby and her sex phantasms don't involve her husband. That Jean is stalking her. That her husband

knows this, and yet appears relatively unconcerned. In any case, Neil ensconces Julie in a snazzy Vienna apartment, then takes off for parts unknown, leaving her to amuse herself with her promiscuous friend, Carol. Together they party like it's 1999, although a serial killer is at work in the city and



his taste is for the decidedly young, captivately beautiful, and deliriously licentious. We know this because director Martino allows us to watch two gorgeous girls get their just desserts while Carol and Julie are fiddling about.

Whilst attending a swank soiree, Carol introduces Julie to her profligate cousin George, a playboy without portfolio, with little more than a, "How are ya," the two embark on a passionate affair. The duo manage to keep things a secret from the husband, but not from Jean, who begins leaving Julie nasty notes with flowers. Then a phone call follows from a disguised voice, asking Julie for a small fortune in exchange for silence concerning the liason. Carol, convinced it is Jean doing the blackmailing, persuades Julie to let her confront him at the drop off so as to give him a piece of her mind.

Instead, Carol winds up in pieces, slashed to death by a leather-jacketed man employing a straight-edged razor, the identifying accoutrements of the maniac in the two previous murder sequences. Still, we haven't seen the killer's face, and now Strange Vice truly becomes a whodunnit, with the viewer left scratching the head, asking, "Just who is raining such bloody rain down on all and sundry?" It is the sadist Jean? Perhaps, George absent during all of this? Or could it be Neil, pretending to take business trips so that he can, incognito, pursue his "little hobby"?

Well, all's well doesn't end well, but before it does end; it all turns out to be far more complicated than you,

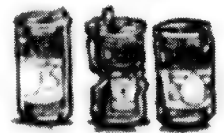
or Ozzy, or your closest, most dazzlingly-brilliant friend could have imagined. Said complications, in the final analysis, stretch credulity to the breaking point; still, Martino paces things smartly, makes effective use of his stylish Eurotrash interiors, and manages to imbue the shock sequences with a palpable air of dread. While some will no doubt object to the gratuitous nudity - every woman in the film has a nude scene, and Ms. Fenech is more often disrobed than robed - you can't really blame Martino, as it becomes painfully obvious as the film unspools, that the actresses, including Fenech, have been hired for their looks and lithesome figures and not for their way with a line.



Your Vice Is A Locked Room And Only I Have The Key (1972) - (d) Sergio Martino

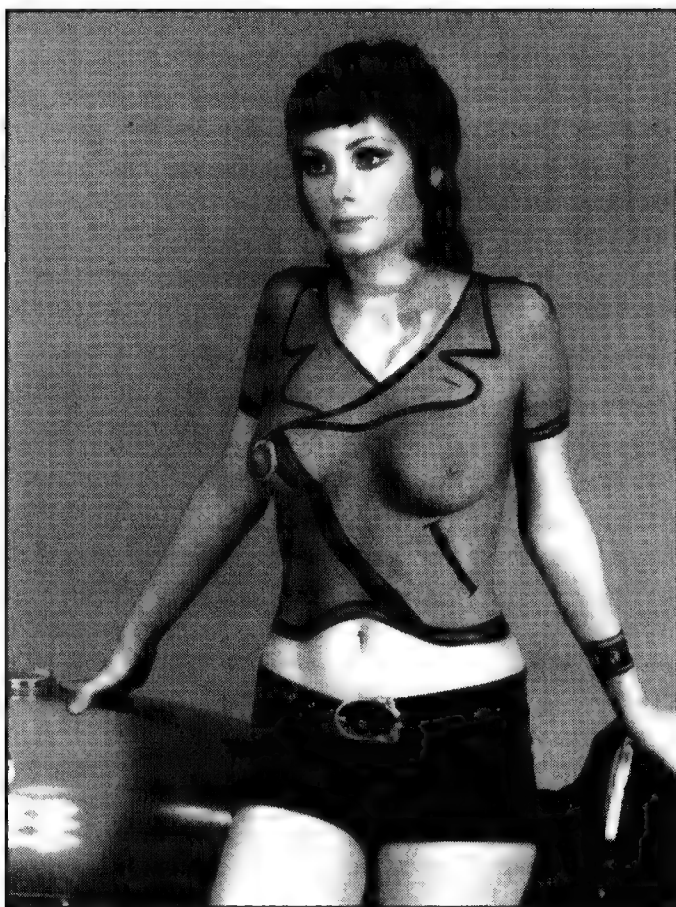
So you refashion Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat," toss out its psychological acuity, ghastly morbidity, and inventive narrative, and what are you left with? Not much, but giallo completists should get a kick out of seeing the luscious Edwige Fenech in the role of a totally amoral femme fatale. That and the fact that she is naked for much of the film AND has a stylish lesbian scene with the equally beautiful, if slightly older, Anita Strindberg. Style appears to be the *raison d'être* for this misbegotten exercise, but that said, director Martino does have an eye for the ambient possibilities of color and lighting - some of the sequences will simply take your breath away, so rich and lustrous are the incidental details of his *mise en scene*. Which are shown to best effect in the expository passages, and, surprisingly, for a genre known for its exploration of the aesthetic and erotic possibilities inherent in the violation of the female form, shown not at all when violence threatens. The story, such as it is, finds us in the

company of one Oliviero Rouvigny, a failed writer living in a decaying mansion with his terribly abused wife, Irina, the aforementioned Anita Strindberg. When not raping or beating her, Oliviero throws lavish, decadent parties for total strangers as no one in the isolated Italian town will have anything to do with him. Save for a mistress who works in a bookstore. She winds up brutally murdered and suspicion naturally falls on Oliviero. Irina, for some unearthly reason, covers for her husband, but when the African maidservant staggers into the parlor with a hideous and fatal stomach wound, Irina reaches for the phone. Once again, Oliviero prevails upon his battered bride to shield him, and so together, they bury the servant behind a wall in the wine cellar. There's no need to go on, is there? We will. Suddenly, there is the lithesome Fenech, as Oliviero's niece, Floriana, clad in micro-mini, eyes uneasily wandering, looking for an opportunity, an invitation, any opening, to parade her assets. She does, and ends up allowing Oliviero, and Irina, and the milkman to sample her myriad charms, and the cat, (remember the cat?) which has been running into every scene since the opening credits, becomes the center of the story, kind of, sort of, and it all becomes surreally risible but you won't care because you're just imagining what it would be like to have Fenech, and there she is again giving you that look and telling you with her eyes, "Yes, I will. Yes. Oh, yes."



The Case of the Bloody Iris (1972) - (d) Anthony Ascott

In this relatively obscure but entertaining giallo, Edwige Fenech again stars as Jenny, a British model decamping in Rome in an effort to distance herself from her former husband Adam, the sociopathic founder of a free love cineacle who is now stalking her. One would be forgiven for concluding that the last thing Jennifer needs in her life at this point is trauma - she also suffers from nightmares centered around the masochistic orgies in which she was forced to participate - but here she is, moving into a snazzy, pomo apartment, secure in the knowledge that its former inhabitant, a beautiful stripper, was brutally murdered - tied up in a bathtub slowly filling with water. If that isn't enough to give you the willies, howabout an equally beautiful blonde being viciously stabbed to death in the apartment elevator a few days before that? Alright, so the apartment building is owned by a suave and handsome playboy Andrea Barto, clearly in love with Jennifer and so probably giving her and her ditz roommate Marilyn a break on the rent, that's no

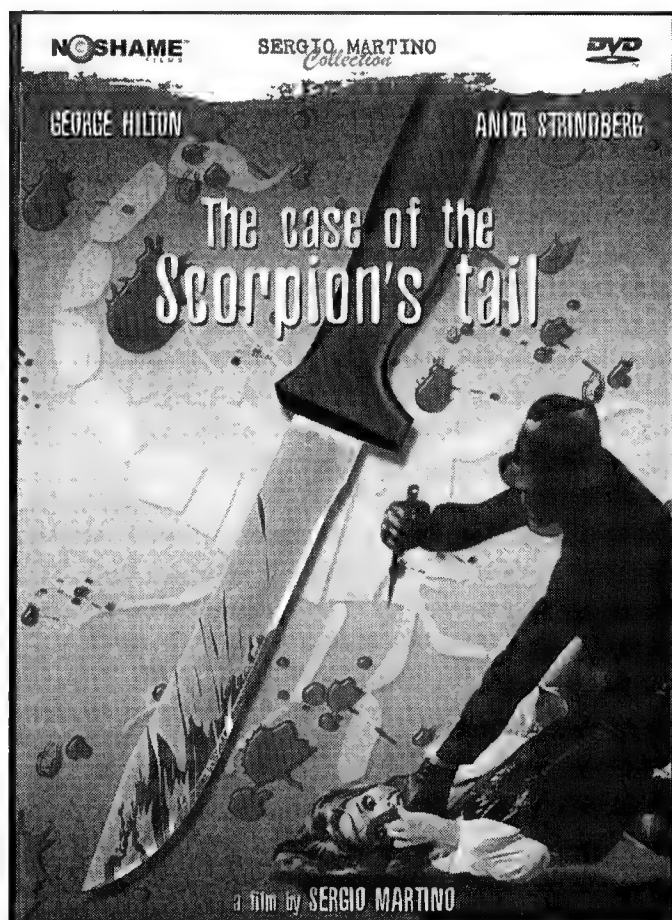


The Case of the Scorpion's Tale (1971) - (d) Sergio Martino

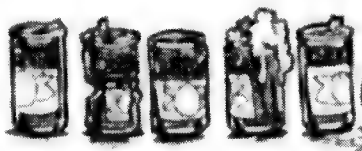
There's as many mysteries abounding in this Italian giallo as questions unanswered. For instance, why is Italian exclusively spoken in both London and Athens? Or why the use of a five-dollar plastic airplane in a disaster sequence in an otherwise handsomely-mounted production such as this one? Oh, yes, and speaking of plastic, a bad use of it was made in the clearly botched boob job of our heroine. We'll leave you to determine which one of the actresses this is as many of the women here appear in the altogether. You think determining the heroine is going to be easy, but *Scorpion's Tale* has a lot of twists designed to keep the viewer off balance as to just which gal we're supposed to be rooting for. That's right, because right from the beginning, we have this beautiful blonde, Evelyn Stewart, coming into an inheritance of a million dollars after her husband dies in the aforementioned airplane crash. All well and good you say, but wait, Evelyn was fooling around on him, lived in a different city, and so rarely saw him, and, most tellingly, doesn't appear to be at all upset that he now sleeps with the fishes. Yes, both Scotland Yard and whatever the Italians call their chief bureau of investigation, suspect her, but it gets more complicated when the insurance company in the form of

reason for taking the place. It is, however, a classy way to introduce the viewer to the apartment's creepy denizens, weirdos who quickly become suspects once a masked intruder breaks into Jennifer and Marilyn's crib. So meet the wizened and terribly unfriendly old lady down the hall, a heavy reader of crime magazines; the gaunt and distant professor of music, a taciturn man given to playing eerie arabesques on his violin at all hours of the night; his daughter, a predatory lesbian enamored of black leather and kinky sex. Let us not forget the husband Adam, out there somewhere. Nor the new boyfriend Andrea, deathly afraid of blood and nauseated by the merest hint of violence. Or is he? Andrea does own the apartment complex, and so has the keys to all the doors, no?

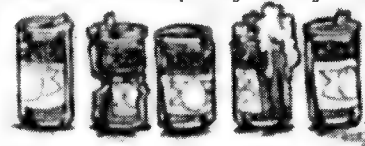
Director Ascott, understanding he's working with the pulpiest of pulp territory here, keeps us from thinking too much by moving things at a brisk pace, and playing-up the quirkiness of his many characters and downplaying the absurd contrivances of the plot. Still, this case gives us more than a freak show. There is Fenech, mostly nude; tantalizing nude scenes sans Fenech; unusual nude sex with and without Fenech; and brutal violence with nude women other than Fenech.



a talk, dark, and handsome investigator oozes onto the scene (George Hilton) intervene. God, it gets deliciously weird and intriguing after this, which for Ozzy, is kind of amazing, as most Italian murder mysteries are rather predictable. Scorpion's Tale, however, is marvelously plotted and intellectually engaging. Moreover, Martino's agitated camerawork, his expressive interiors, and his almost synesthetic sense of color, make this a film as much about feeling as it is about just whodunnit. For the more jaded amongst us, the violent bits are worked out with a chess masters' precision, are quite graphic, and are genuinely frightening.



not only to understand but to be aroused. Nothing in any scene betrays contempt for the plight of the protagonist nor any of the characters forced to act against type. In fact, it's all played for maximum arousal. That's pretty heavy for such an impoverished exploitation flick, don'tcha think?

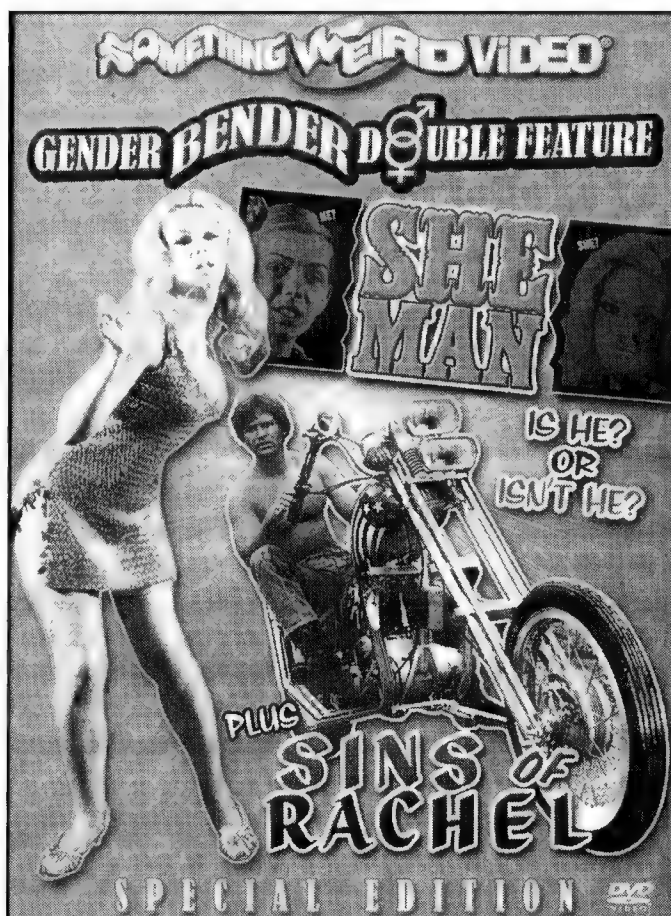


Sins of Rachel (1972) - (d) Dick Fontaine

Something Weird specializes in unearthing bottom-of-the-barrel exploitation flicks, but this one is so absurdly low, so utterly lacking in merit on all levels, we'd have to put it underneath the barrel. Unequal part mystery, part small-town expose, part sexploitation, Sins fails on all levels yet manages to entertain, as both director Fontaine and his talentless cast play it completely straight, giving it all they got. Which, admittedly, ain't much; nevertheless, when you're given subplots involving incest, latent homosexuality, male prostitution, suicide, and sexagenarian sex, what's not to like? Especially when at the center of it all is an alarmingly unattractive

She-Male (1971) - (d) Bob Clark

That's right, the Porky's guy, checking in with a surreal and quite sympathetic study of transsexualism. In a film noir setting. OK, so sue me, Ozzy said it was surreal. In any case, prepare to be absolutely wow'ed! He can deny it all he wants, as he says he only only watches a film once, but John Waters, hooked to a lie-detector, would be forced to confess that he's not only seen this audacious gem a thousand times but purloined the script and committed it to memory before destroying it. Why does Mr. Fide throw down this absurd accusation? Well, because he's drunk. Also also because everyone here sounds like Divine on a bender. And the cinematography, while resolutely amateurish, betrays flourishes that just scream, "Film geek." That's so Waters. Not convinced? Just check out that blackout sequence in the hotel room early in this flick. Orson Welles wishes he could have done so much with a one camera set-up and such cheap lighting. Check out, too, this wild, wild story, which has Korean vet Albert being blackmailed into serving a transvestite military deserter as his/her French maid. The vet discovers he enjoys the feel of silk panties against his crack and almost immediately falls in love with one of the servants, a blonde lesbian with a severe overbite. She's being blackmailed as well. In fact, everyone working for Dominita, as the deserter calls herself, is being blackmailed in order to further an international spy scheme. No, don't go there. Why should you go there? The film cost about tree fifty to make so don't ask questions. Just move on. Alright, stop! Ask. You in the back, yes? "Despite the fact that there's so much preversion abounding, Clark gives us little nudity or kinky sex. Why is this professor?" Simple, stupid: Clark is far more interested in presenting a sympathetic portrait of transvestism; we're being asked



and badly-aging virago, the titular Rachel (Ann Noble), who asking us to believe that once-upon-a-time she was the hottest lounge singer in show business. Thankfully, we are spared her singing; however, we are forced to watch her in various states of undress and for that one cannot give thanks. But that's what fast-forward buttons on the remote were invented for.

Anyway, we watch this fat fool get brutally bludgeoned to death early on, and just like that, we find ourselves in the middle of a murder mystery. Well, sort of, as Fontaine quickly lets us see he's going for, an autistic, er artistic, remake of Peyton Place and so decides to deeply investigate the backgrounds of all of his suspects. There's Jimmy, the pussyboy son who sleeps in his Rachel's room but is falling in love with . . . Bruce, a Kung-Fu biker divorcee fighting his feelings for Jimmy and trying to save his inheritance from . . . Hank Gregory, a hot saloon singer servicing Rachel but really in love with a local waitress with both trying to avoid the wrath of . . . Rev. Taylor who hides a terrible secret and, after hearing Jimmy confess to fantasies of surfing the Hershey Highway, warns him away from his daughter . . . Shirley, enough in-love with Jimmy to have murdered his emasculating mom . . .

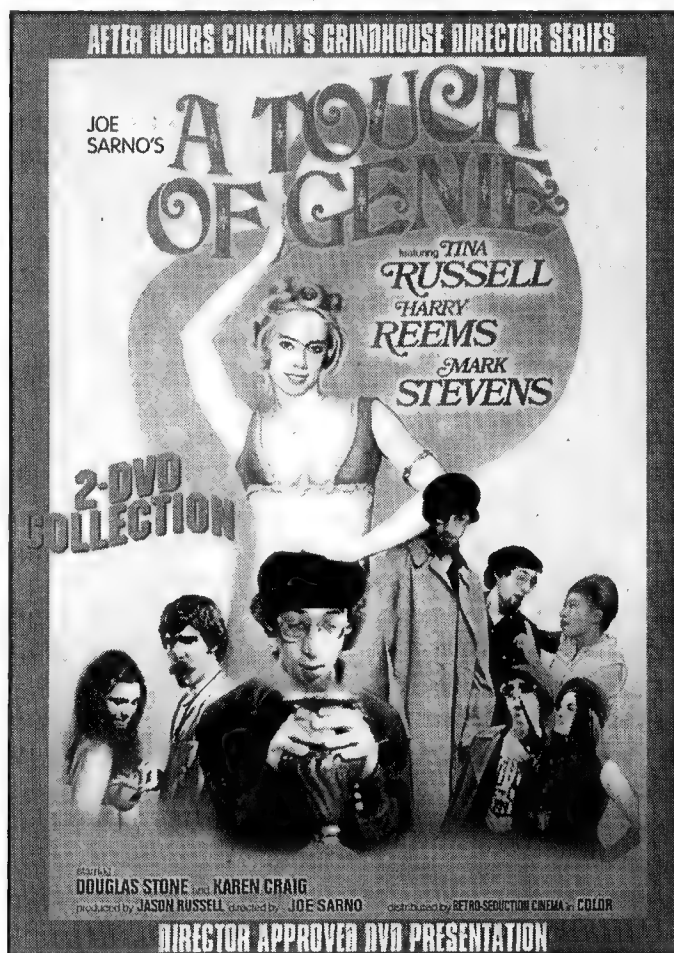
Somewhat surprisingly, there's no female nudity here. The hottest scenes are those between the son, Jimmy, and the object of his lust, Bruce. Apparently, director Fontaine worked as a gay male model while overseeing some of the earliest homosexual feature films as well, including the first theatrically-released one, *The Days of the Greek Gods*. This provides the explanation - the real mystery of Sins - for allowing the intellectually-challenged and gruesome Anne Noble (*The Corpse Grinders*) to write the script and to cast herself as star. It's Freudianism par excellence: you get a gay macho guy with a hatred for mommy, of course he's going to make the mother as unattractive and as fucked-up as humanly possible. The beauty of it all, though, is that Noble really thinks she's hot. Watching her strut her stuff while employing what she apparently believes is an alluring British accent goes beyond delusional and into the realm of psychosis. Imagine Edith Massey playing it straight in a remake of *Some Like It Hot*, and you've got an idea of what we're talking about here.



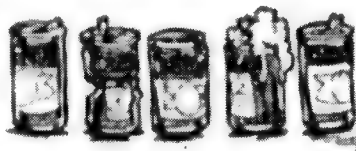
A Touch Of Genie (1974) - (d) Joe Sarno

Joe Sarno is perhaps the only sexploitation director to whom we can safely apply the term auteur. Ironically,

given the American public's distaste for pornography, it was Andrew Sarris who first brought Sarno to the attention of mainstream audiences. While *Touch Of Genie*, a comedy, hardly bears comparison to dark psychosexual dramas like *Sin in the Suburbs* (1964) or *Moonlighting Wives* (1966), it is, nevertheless, an enjoyable bit of fluff. Audiences today may be turned off by the repulsive Jewish stereotypes and incestuous themes, but they certainly will be turned on by the sex scenes, played with passion and surprising delicacy by some of the then hottest names in the business - Harry Reems, Mark Stevens, Tina Russell. The script, such as it is, finds a hircine, young antiques dealer with a mother fixation, coming into possession of a magic lamp. Upon employing it as a vaginal substitute, a beautiful blonde genie appears and grants the antiques dealer, whose name is Melvin Finkelfarb, five wishes. Naturally, Melvin, a complete loser, wastes his five wishes asking to be transmogrified into the biggest porn stars of the day and placed in the middle of their films. Unfortunately, Mom keeps popping up to ruin things, and it isn't until Melvin is well into his fourth wish that he learns to relax and let Mom participate. No, not with Melvin, thankfully, we're spared that; nevertheless, 70s audiences must have had their minds blown watching Melvin earnestly studying his mother's technique as she



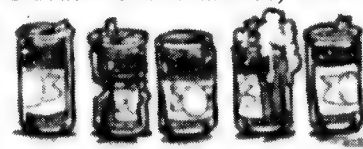
industriously slid her mouth up and down Marc Stevens' engorged phallus. The Oedipal fixation is a curious subplot in a pornographic film refusing to stray beyond depictions of oral and vaginal sex. Also curious is gracing us with a mother in possession of conventional features but with the body of a Playboy bunny. Clearly, Sarno has issues of his own, but that's why his films, even throwaways such as this, stand apart. They reward repeated viewing. And constant study.



Sock It To Me Baby! (1968) - (d) Lou Campa

Women desirous of understanding the pathetic nature of men or in learning just how low they can sink in their unceasing quest for cheap thrills, may find the answers to this and more in *Sock It To Me Baby!* an obscure, soft-core rarity from the late 60s. Campa's (*Venus In Furs*, *Jailbait*) feature concerns a hefty, balding, middle-aged alcoholic, a borderline imbecile being driven slowly insane by all the promiscuity in the suburbs. The guy, let's call him Lou, has an attractive French mistress who doesn't mind sharing both her bed and her whiskey with him, yet for Lou, it's just not enough. It can never be enough. Not when everywhere Lou looks he finds his senses assaulted by naked flesh. Tender, moist, glistening, naked flesh. Like his niece, a slatternly blonde who, though sleeping with Lou's wife, has taken to lying around Lou's house in *deshabille*. She wants Lou, but Lou knows incest, even with a nubile and willing niece, is a sin. So Lou locks himself in his bedroom whenever the niece hits on him. This becomes more in the nature of imprisonment rather than escape as the niece, driven to the point of madness by her desire, adjourns to the adjoining bathroom to loudly masturbate, crying out Lou's name during repeated and endless climaxes. Then there's Lou's wife, a lesbian with a penchant for wild parties, bacchanals in which high-school girls are encouraged to drink heavily and strip to raucous rock 'n' roll music. Lou can't shut his door to this as much of the action takes place in his bedroom. So run, Lou baby, run. Outside into the cool night air where you can be alone with your repressed desires and your gin. But, it's no dice, isn't it Lou? The curtains are up for the show at the neighbors. Quite the Dionysian celebration it is, too, involving as it does, a teenage baby sitter and a number of juvenile delinquents with all manner of perverse fantasies. Coming true for all of them with this no-holds-or-holes-barred lassie. Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide for Lou, and that's what makes *Sock It To Me* something other

than run-of-the-mill fodder for the chronic masturbator: the effectively crude, surreally unrelenting depiction of a world gone mad with concupiscence. Deranged to the point of somnambulism. Where sex, despite its polymorphously perverse permutations, is rote, the participants performing with unhurried urgency, like automatons in a burlesque of lust. The viewer isn't even given the satisfaction of watching attractive actors. And why should we? Sex here isn't about arousal, or beauty, or transcendence. It's not dirty. Not even clinical. It's deadier than that. Yes, there's a "sock" to *Sock It To Me*, but it hits one in totally unexpected places. Ouch!



The Girl Next Door (2007) - (d) Gregory Wilson

Boys and girls, today we are going to get a lesson in aesthetics. In a sentence or two, Oz proposes, for the price of your soul, to amaze your friends, mystify your family, and frustrate your associates. Costing you nothing in the process! Here's how it works: you ask yourself after reading a book or, as in this case, watching a movie, what the director is trying to do. Taking *The Girl Next Door* as case study, this question can easily be addressed: said director hasn't the foggiest idea. Not to insult Jack Ketchum, on whose novel this is based, or Phillip Nutman who co-wrote the screenplay, but if you're going to make a movie about a teenager tortured to death by 50s adolescents, you'd better have a vision. Or a reason to make us believe. That last bit gets us to the second question: do the creators or artists do it well? That is to say, do they make us believe? Well, no, they don't, as the dialogue is hackneyed and cliched, and we're never convinced that our boy next door has any reason not to tell the cops or his parents that a sweet young adolescent is being brutalized in the house adjacent to him. Psychologically, we're asked to accept this, because we're shown our boy cavorting with his friends next door. But it's idiot speak and we need more from that, even from children. You don't bond as a result of someone calling you an asshole and throwing a cigarette in your face. Well then, let's turn to the mother. She's pretty frightening, and she's a decent actress; she manages to convey sexual attraction and dread at once. Is that enough to keep a child from telling his parents that there's a maniac living one house down? Of course not, so that leads us to the third Aristotelean aesthetic criterion for judging a work of art: is it worth doing? See, with that, you perhaps come to the conclusion that perhaps it's the third question you

may have to ask first. And if the answer is, "No," then that probably means you have to be a fucking genius to even think about approaching a subject like this. Passolini was far smarter than you or me, but can you really say that Salo works? Or even, on a far more primitive level, that something like Hostel or Irreversible bears repeated viewings? No, of course not, some things are best left to a police report, and the facts in the case of The Girl Next Door need to be buried and forgotten.



is that the audience is moved in a profound, fundamental, almost atavistic way. So, The Brain That Wouldn't Die is essential viewing. Especially the unedited version, as it contains a denouement in which our philosophically challenged assistant gets his withered arm pulled off by the eggplant, resulting in, what is most likely, the longest death scene in cinematic history.



The Brain That Wouldn't Die 1962) - (d) Joseph Green II

Alive, without a body! Fed by an unspeakable horror from Hell! Great tag line, and "unspeakable" is the proper term to use when describing this flick. As in "unspeakably bad." How bad? Well, it took these Tarrytown, New Jersey filmmakers almost three years to get their film into general release. This during the late 50s, when drive-ins would jam almost anything on to the bottom of their bills. Save for this stinker about a brilliant surgeon seeking to perfect a serum to reanimate dead tissue. Despite use of serum having already withered the Doc's assistant's hand, and turned a kidnapped stranger into a giant, homicidal eggplant. Undaunted, our mad medical man decides to inject it into his wife's head after she's decapitated in an auto accident. Plopping the head in a baking pan and pumping said head full of the drug, our psychotic surgeon no sooner sees his now ex-wife start to blink, then he's off to strip joints searching for a curvaceous body for her. Which the Doc doesn't find right away, as he finds he rather enjoys tossing back a few while watching cat fights - Man! those Fifties ecdysiasts were the most! Meanwhile, back at the lab, the head is making life miserable for the assistant by insisting on banal metaphysical conversations. With the eggplant, it's even worse. It's getting telepathically emasculated, derided for being a giant unable to break out of the closet in which the deranged doc has imprisoned him. And it's no picnic for the viewer, either. When not being assaulted by the tedious public domain score - some of which later turned up in Andy Milligan's The Body Beneath - we're treated to expostulations such as: "The paths of experimentation twist and turn through mountains of miscalculations and often lose themselves in error and darkness." Surely, one must conclude after hearing lines like this, that the entire project is the work of inspired visionaries. Or monumental idiots. Six dozen of one, half a dozen of the other. In the final analysis, it doesn't matter what one says about movies like this; one is either delighted by such earnest, almost impossible ineptitude, or one is horrified. It is all one and the same thing, but the upshot



Return to An Angry Red Planet

By David Hayes

Academy-Award-winning special-effects artist Robert Skotak (*Aliens*, *Terminator 2*) recalls the first days of school in his 7th grade class. Everyone would rush in to school and regale the other students with tales of monsters, spaceships and evil villains. The movies that the children had seen over their summer vacation took precedence over reading and writing and, certainly, arithmetic. There was one movie in particular that captured the fancies of children and adults alike in the summer of 1960. It was a curious, ambitious combination of talents and artistry called *The Angry Red Planet*.

"*Angry* was a big buzz movie that year," remembers Skotak. He cites the film as an inspiration in the choice of his own career and a still-strong friendship with *Angry's* director/co-writer, sci-fi legend Ib Melchior (Midnight Marquee Books has recently released Ib Melchior's biography, penned by Robert Skotak, titled *Ib Melchior: Man of Imagination*). Between *The Angry Red Planet's* strange Martian creatures, revolutionary Cinemagic process and non-stop action, the stage was set for one of the most popular sci-fi cult films of all time.

Jumping into the story without the benefit of a credit sequence (more on that later), *The Angry Red Planet* opens on Earth. The ship that had been sent to

Mars is finally returning... but something is terribly wrong. The ship returns with only two crew members surviving from the original four. Dr. Iris Ryan (Nora Hayden), the beautiful heroine, must recount what happens in a spine-tingling flashback while Earth's scientists race against the clock to try and stop whatever parasite is attached to Gerald Mohr, the ship's captain, from killing him. Injected with sodium pentathol, Dr. Ryan is forced to conquer her amnesia and recount the story of their planet-side visit, where the humans are nothing more than insects, bothersome irritants that need to be eliminated. In an unusual cinematic move for that particular era of filmmaking, a woman was the movie's hero. Nora Hayden's character saved the day, brought the ship back to Earth and provided the missing information to save her captain's life. *The Angry Red Planet* has proven itself a unique slice of science fiction in many different capacities.

Always, "...fascinated with science fiction," Sidney Pink came up with the initial story line for the film and wrote the first draft of the screenplay. As a youngster, Sid Pink was fascinated with the outer space stories popularized in pulp magazines like *Amazing Stories*. *The Angry Red Planet*, in look and feel, brings to life the incredible, striking cover illustrations of some of those early pulps. Sidney Pink, by 1959, had already had an extensive career in motion pictures. He was

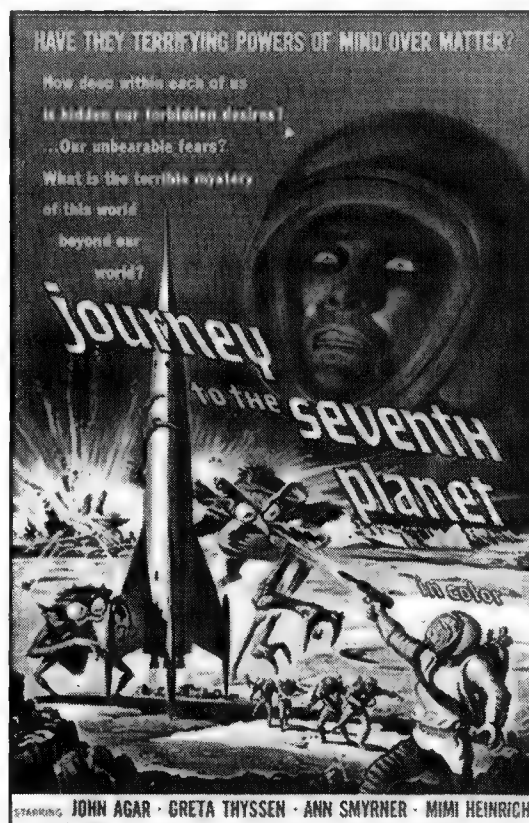


Grand National's Production Budget Manager in the late-thirties and his production credits include *Bwana Devil* (1950), the world's first 3-D color feature film. His role as a "film innovator" was a good groundwork for the ambitious and extremely under-financed *Angry*. "It [*The Angry Red Planet*] was written on my kitchen table," Pink said, recounting the early genesis of the project, "My kids were my critics, they'd tell me what was good and what just fell flat!" Eventually, Pink had enough "good" material to go into pre-production. The initial screenplay was called "The Planet Mars"



and included a host of strange creatures and an entire Martian city. Pink recalled that originally, "We had a flying creature, a giant serpent, but we couldn't afford it." The giant serpent eventually turned up in Pink's *Reptilicus* (1962).

Pink realized that the story needed something more and enlisted the aid of longtime sci-fi great, Ib Melchior. Melchior was an old hand at science fiction. His stories and films have delighted multiple generations of fantasy-buffs from the short stories he would publish in the pulps (like *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*), episodes of the *Outer Limits* television program and even the story behind Roger Corman's wickedly dark *Death Race 2000* (1975). Sidney Pink couldn't have picked a more competent collaborator. Melchior was also selected to direct the film, making *The Angry Red Planet* his feature film directorial debut. With Pink's original story and Melchior's re-write focusing on a surrealistic nightmare and hard, concrete science, the film was ready to begin. Sidney Pink didn't want to make the same old sci-fi film that had been playing for years and was still being churned out by the major studios (examples of the competition include *Missile to the Moon* and Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space*). He wanted a catch, something new, something that would set the audience on their ears. Enter Norman Maurer, artist, creator of Cinemagic and co-producer of *The Angry Red Planet*.



Son-in-law of legendary Stooge, Moe Howard, Norman Maurer was a very popular commercial artist and comic book illustrator. His work on *Daredevil*, *Tor* and the 3-D adventures of *The Three Stooges* were regarded at the time as being of the highest caliber of sequential storytelling. At the time that Sidney Pink and Norman Maurer met, Maurer was developing a special effect process called "Cinemagic." Maurer, in conjunction with Pathe Laboratories, developed the Cinemagic process for the scenes that were directly on the planet of Mars. Ideally, the process was developed to approximate the look of line drawings. Maurer painted all of the Mars landscape and background scenes and storyboarded a majority of the film (ably assisted in storyboarding the action scenes by *Space Ghost* creator Alex Toth). The actors were then photographed normally in normal, 35mm black and white. A positive black and white image and a negative black and white image were then sandwiched together and printed on a third film through a pair of lucite lenses built specifically for Cinemagic. The film was then exposed in red and onto color film. The result was like nothing the film-going public had ever seen before. The striking, surreal images from Mars sent the audience to the planet with the astronauts. It was this process, that made the creatures and other special effects, (which would have probably been laughed at in any other film), work so well in *The Angry Red Planet*. "The damn Cinemagic didn't work like it should," Sid Pink said from his home in Florida, "It was supposed to be sort of a 3-D effect. What we came up with was great anyway!"

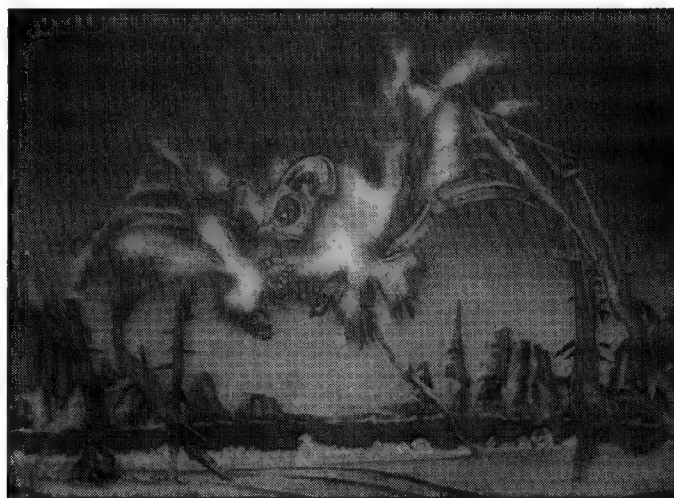
Angry was definitely a low-budget picture (coming in at \$190,000 with \$54,000 in lab costs for the Cinemagic process alone). The shooting schedule was extremely tight, ten days was the entirety of the shooting schedule with only an additional three days scheduled for and miniature photography and effects. To make matters worse, the speed of the production combined with the limited finances meant that many of the creatures and special effects, the saleable parts of the film, didn't always work correctly or didn't always

come out like they were intended. "The creatures kind of worked," Robert Skotak related from his many conversations with Ib Melchior, "it was a real challenge for the budget. The Chemical Plant broke a tentacle early on and had to be wired up." Many of the other creatures and props had to be improvised

on the spot. The Claw Prop wasn't designed to grab anything, so the effects people took two, 2x4 pieces of wood and made a simple scissors mechanism that was wheeled in on a wheelbarrow with a large rock in it. The Giant Amoeba was also an on-the-spot creation. The creature was finished just in time for it's shots; only a giant rotating eye had been included in the middle of the creature,

completely different from the director's description. Melchior, exasperated about the speed of shooting and unable to fine-tune the project, accepted the amoeba with a grumble and it stands to this day as one of the creepiest scenes in the film.

Quite possibly the most interesting, and longest lasting, memory from *The Angry Red Planet* is the Bat-rat-spider-crab. This unique creature had the face of a rat/bat the body of a spider and the claws of a crab (among other animal parts). It stalked the astronauts for a terrifying portion of the film, but it was probably more terrifying just trying to get the Bat-rat-spider-crab to work. A major problem with using marionette creatures is the tendency for the wires holding the



creatures up to be visible when lighted from the rear. "Herman Townsley came up with a solution to the problem," Robert Skotak said, "he developed an acid that would burn away the tiniest layer of the wire so it wouldn't shine; but it made the wires very weak. The puppet had to be very lightweight so you can see it almost float at times on the screen. Only one day was given to shoot the Bat-rat-spider-crab. On a bigger budget, the scenes would probably have taken a week but the money and the time just wasn't there. It [the creature] was very hard to puppet at normal speed, much less at high speed." The Bat-rat-spider-crab still made a lasting impression on audience members even if it was just a rubber mask with scissors inside to make the mouth work.

The Angry Red Planet went into pre-production in September of 1959, finished shooting in November of 1959 and was sold to American International Pictures in December of 1959. *The Angry Red Planet* was released by AIP, headed up by the notorious Sam Arkoff, in 1960. "Arkoff and I had a working relationship. Neither of us trusted the other... which worked out well because I wouldn't touch him with a ten-foot pole. Jimmy Nicholson was the brains of that operation. With Arkoff, you never got a straight count." Although *Angry Red Planet* was a great success by independent standards, Pink and the other co-producers never really got the return on the picture that would have been their due with normal, non-Hollywood, accounting.

The lack of an opening credit sequence has been attributed to the influence of Sam Arkoff and Jimmy Nicholson. AIP, at the time, was one of the first companies to put the credits of their films at the end to minimize the lack of "star" quality names. This still doesn't explain the lack of a title card, though. Robert Skotak suspects that the credits, "Were at the beginning of the film, but AIP put the credits at the end. The musical theme at the end of the film was

less objectionable." The opening theme music was a musical-maelstrom designed to parallel Mars' surrealistic landscape and indigenous lifeforms.

The Angry Red Planet helped to change the face of science fiction in the 1960s. Although it was a production that was under-financed, frequently



cobbled together with spit and glue and resulted in the unfortunate parting of the three men responsible, *Angry* has stood the test of time. *The Angry Red Planet* is one of the most ambitious low-budget features ever produced. It succeeded beyond anyone's wildest imaginations and achieved a level of quality that is not representative of what the filmmakers

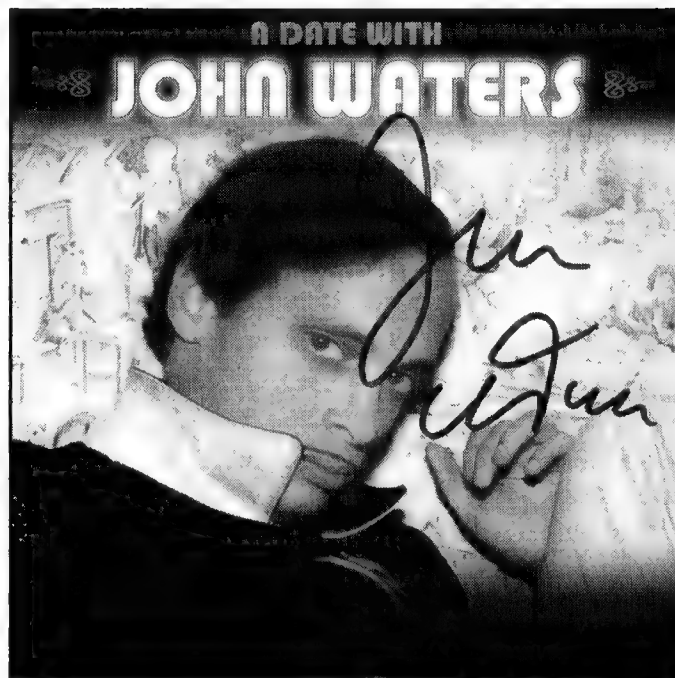
had to work with. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of men like Ib Melchior, Norman Maurer and Sidney Pink, *The Angry Red Planet* has guaranteed its place in the pantheon of great science fiction. This is more surprising to the men behind the movie than the delighted audiences that thrilled to the adventures on the fourth planet. "From the checks I still seem to be getting," Sidney Pink said, with no small amount of surprise, "the picture is still playing. I read recently that it was on American Movie Classics, on cable."

AUDIO DEPRAVATION



Various - A Date With John Waters (New Line Records)

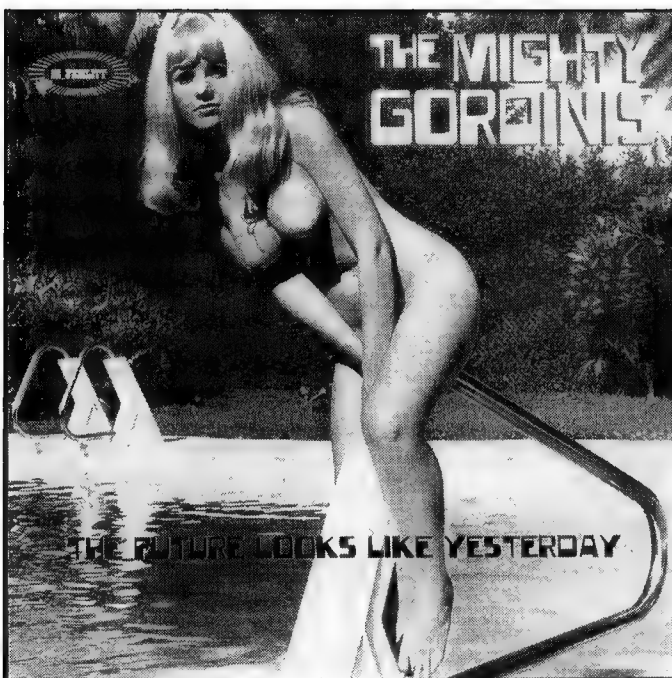
So, we've met Mr. Waters and a more affable and charming man you'll never meet. But a date with the guy? Well, let's take a gander at the musical backdrop he has planned for your seduction, shall we. Start with a childish bit of 50s vocal whimsy, "You Belong to Me," by some duo calling themselves Patience and Prudence. How sweet, how deliciously campy. You really want me, don't you Johnnie Boy? OK, I'll have that drink now and sure, pass me that joint. Let's get a little wild and pogo to "Ca Plane Pour Moi." Oh, wait, it's somebody named Elton Motello changing the lyrics and turning it into a paen to cocksucking. Yikes, I don't think I'm ready to go that far, this fast. Yes, I'm a bit confused about my sexuality, but thanks for "Johnny Are You Queer" as it allows me to laugh about it. As does Clarence 'Frogman' Henry's boasting about his trisexuality: boy, girl and amphibian.



God, now I'm feeling confused and dirty. Put on Ray Charles' classic "(Night Time Is) The Right Time," I think I'm ready. No, wait, is that Edith Massey doing a totally retarded take on "Big Girls Don't Cry"? What kind of mood is that supposed to put me in? John Prine and Iris DeMent dueting about sniffing panties? Yes, I can wrap my mind around the concept of chicks-with-dicks, but if this is what gay is, I'll think I'll pass. Still, it has been fun. One more drink for the road, and then along with Dean Martin, I'm going to "Hit The Road to Dreamland."

The Mighty Gordinis - the Future Looks Like Yesterday (Hi Fidelity)

These talented ursatz amateurs mix surf, punk, and garage into a heady brew as tasty as any Belgian beery beverage. Ah, yes, you beer drinkers are scratching your head at this point and asking yourself: "Belgian? N'est pas akin de la Francais?" Mais oui, it is, in fact, which is probably the reason the take on the band is either



dismissive or adulatory on the continent, as everyone there knows that with the exception of Thundercrack, the French can neither rock nor roll. In the States, no one knows about these guys - even WFMU's Bill Kelly and Lil Steven have failed to pick up on them - and that's a shame, because The Gordinis swing like God's own dick. In the way European white boys who only know African-Americans from records can. This is not an insult; it's what made The Stones and The Small Faces great, and it's what makes this foursome so effective: they're failing gloriously at being black. Save for cuts like "Don'tcha Love T'Rex?" "Hole in My Head," and "Babylon Dolls," where they say, "Fuck it, we're caucasian rockers like Joey Ramone and Johnny Thunders and we don't care who knows it." And that's where it all gets truly glorious.

Angels of Light- We Are Him (Young God)

Michael Gira is a juicy piece of soul and this album is a juicy piece of soul. I'm still really really not used to the polished, Akron/Family backed Angels of Light juice he's been juicing out the past however long but the sounds on this album are so magnificently varied and sometimes magnificently not varied and it is a weird/heavy(like a funeral)/dreamy listen as a result. Maybe I just want to be listening to the Swans. But I like this, too. I wish it were more perverted? There are many many ecstatically great moments in listening experience on this album, lock groove repetitions that rock on your brain and get you stuck into some real deal primal native nature business--- yer punned with a gentle lock groove fuck and then it

gets better. I really like this record despite including traces of some throw up average altcountry whatever, sometimes the chord progressions and the general starts to maybe go into the realm of the typical--- but I think with Michael Gira und his gang, they've got all their elements in check. Variety is thee spice of life, beauty in variance, love in variance, universality in variance, and when you're on both ends of the spectrum you accomplish/feel/experience something the realist thing and when people are in on yer art they get a good taste of that real themselves. Artists who milk the entire art-life experience like mister Gira are the true modern humanitarians of sound!!! Buy thee album. (jenny)

Einsturzende Neubauten- Alles Wieder Offen (Potomak)

Alles Wieder Offen is great. It makes me feel like I am listening to Michael Bolton and Kluster at the same time. I feel like I am being hugged by a beautiful, elderly, dada-blood pair of grandparents, babooshkas, old German ladies with massive bosoms telling you a yarn about mystical shit. Then I feel like I'm in a weird dance club in the rainforest. Einsturzende Neubauten are too awesome for words and their weird does me so right... OK, so this album is also super awesome because it is all fan-funded? This is how I think every group should function. I think it's a lot of bullshit having record company executives giving you all the blowjobs and bux you need to record and release an album because diy or die, you know, I luv them so hard, I hate it that most people don't work things like they do. Every artist should keep his/her ideas and energy non-diluted and not in anyone's hands but thems owns. In a perfect world, I guess: but Neubauten's already there!! So why can't you be, too? It's like Narnia without the Jesus bullshit. The album is wavy European melodies and sounds and feelings. The sounds are diverse and wonderful; "Nagorny Karabach" is beautiful dreamy floating windy bass driving the Autobahn at three in the morning drunk and everything's in slow motion. "Let's do it Dada" is completely successful even though its name and lyrics seem borderline silly willy but it don't take long at all to give you (blessed listener) that dada feeling, the good one, the real good one! Einsturzende Neubauten make me weave!! (jenny)

Dub Trio- Cool Out and Coexist (ROIR)

Most people are a little phony. Thee Dub Trio are most people. There's an energy to dub music and the

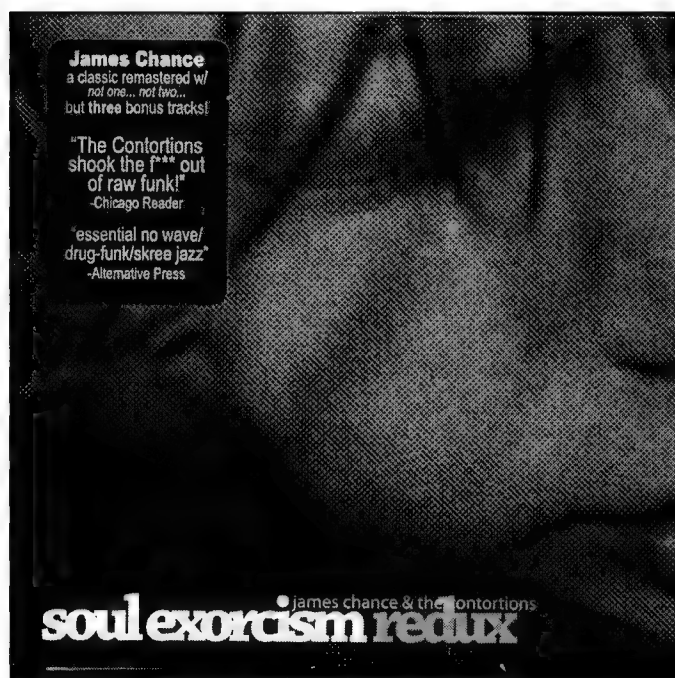
Dub Trio only tap into it for a few seconds at a time and it's so garbled up in noninnovative typical post-hardcore whatever guitar I don't feel like it's more than a wee bit effective--- and it's not even a little affective. Cool out and Coexist is recorded live, and it feels like a really long show, I can imagine my legs getting tired. It's just about fifty minutes. Sometimes the groop taps a teeny bit in to the real and the listener is briefly transported, but it's like THE TRIO only use these real dub relaxing hazy dreamy spots in their set as a transition between more cocky guitar "heavy rocking" which is really just derivative derivative derivative to my ears. Every song goes on forever. I love love love dub but I can't stand the generic sound these guys and a bunch of other phonies are latched onto. Anyway, I won't be "cool[in'] out and coexist[in']" to this any time soon cause I can think of about half a million groups who tap in to the universal smoke-grass feeling and who I can coexist without givin' me have an upset stomach and making me feel like my values are being raped by a retard. (jenny)

Parker and Lily - Here Comes Winter (Manifesto)

If David Lynch was searching for composers for his latest suburban nightmare, he could do worse than this luminously creepy New York duo. Moreover, we're betting said twosome would come a whole lot cheaper than Angelo Badalementi as well. Lily describes this haunted, tinker-toy noir as "strange hush," and really, that's not a bad way of putting it (although taking a peek at the lyrics shows that the combo doesn't enjoy saying much at all). The work itself is deceptively simple, disturbingly stark. Open with a moody, childlike organ riff, or ghostly tremolo, reverbed guitar figure, overdub disembodied vocal; Carnival-of-souls' Farfisa, sepulchral vibraphone, skeletal riddims, and there you have it: party music for a funeral home. There's a few up-tempo bossa-nova intros buried amidst all the quiet disquiet; nevertheless, even those happy-go-lucky ersatz South American imports get zombified.

James Chance - Soul Exorcism Redux (ROIR)

Uncut deconstructionist funk from a terribly heated live show in Rotterdam in 1980. What Chance was all about here was dropping the do-it-yourself aesthetics of punk and the noisy minimalism of New York's No Wave into the tightly controlled rhythms of classic funk. The result was truly inspired and while definitely funky, it



wasn't music you could dance to. Unless you were in the grips of a grand mal seizure. Chance, bless him, tried to show you how in his "Twitch," but he was only putting us on. God himself, that is, James Brown couldn't get up off of that thing to any of this. Which is not to say that each and every second does not fascinate and hold-up under repeated listenings. Whether it's manglings of disco favorites like "Don't Stop Til You Get Enough," replete with sour trumpet calls, Chance's hortatory vocals and addled saxophone bleatings; or oneric shuffles a la "I Danced With A Zombie," there's no denying the off-hand, insane genius of it all. And we're not even talking about Chance's take on "King Heroin," which is so out there that we can't advise taking a trip on it. Just because you might not come back.

The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion - Jukebox Explosion Rockin' Mid-90s Punks! (In The Red)

As with most art, this collection of eighteen vinyl B-sides and limited edition seven-inchers is completely useless. As rock, you cannot dance to it, as the unusual stresses and fractured rhythms make that an impossibility. As blues, these ur-tunes revel far too happily in their twisted sensibility, their absurdly dandified licentiousness. In fact, to have released any of these cuts as a single is a joke. The whole idea behind a forty-five is its accessibility, that quality which allows it to reach and stick with the greatest number of peoploids in the shortest amount of time. That is to say, there is no commerical potential with any of this, since most of the compositions contain little



more than a riff overlaid with absurdist bits of business and Jon doing his best to miss notes he could hit in his sleep. Nevertheless, these throwaways are endlessly fascinating, as there's so much going on, seemingly at cross purposes that there's fun to be had listening to it all come together. Despite the band's worst intentions. And when they play it relatively straight, as on "Ghetto Mom," which sounds like an outtake from *Too Much Too Soon*; or "Down Low," which, in turn, sounds like an outtake from *Exile On Main St.*, you realize how great these guys could have been had they not confused the lack of all conviction with passionate intensity.

John Schooley and His One Man Band - One Man Against the World (Voodoo Rhythm)

Switzerland's Voodoo Rhythm label is mighty partial to one-man band types, and with this blues drenched offering from John Schooley, one can see why. Playing with demented energy, deceptive simplicity, and bravado to spare, the Austin, Texas-based performer bleeds urgency into every note he strikes and each syllable he utters.

A former member of the Revelators and the Fantastic Hard Feelings, and a former sideman for R.L. Burnside, Schooley amps up his sound with a surprisingly full kick-pedal drum technique while he plays open chord guitar tunings through various levels of distortion, and wails some mighty tasty blues harmonica riffs. The natural inclination is to compare him with the late Hasil Adkins. Truthfully, the godfather of psychobilly wasn't half the



musician Scooley is here.

Bursting with ominous swamp blues and ironic crime movie dialogue galore ("One Man Against the World"), Schooley completely renovates classic blues ditties ("Wild Cat Tamer," "Screwdriver") with shamanistic zeal. Playing hard and loud ("Miss Maybelle," "Somebody in My Home") he sounds as if bad love and cheap wine has permanently warped his soul.

Yet Schooley is surprisingly versatile. Old-time hillbilly stompers ("Down South Blues"), Stray Cat inflected rockabilly ("Hudcore"), and old-timey acoustic blues ("Aberdeen, Mississippi") are all put through his sonic meat-grinder to great effect. Further, a guest cellist adds big production allusions to a unique rendition of an old Lee Hazelwood tune ("My Baby Cried All Night Long"). Best of all, Schooley's Dylanesque mass murder tale ("The Crooked Path") offers folk myth-making at its most sensationalistic.

Occasionally, Schooley's need for better recording circumstances or a prominent bassist are abundantly clear. However, his variegated musical attack - and even his self-penned liner notes - prove enormously entertaining over the long haul. JohnSchooley.com. (Ken Burke)

King Automatic - I Walk My Murderous Intentions Home (Voodoo Rhythm)

First off, allow me to congratulate this one-man band for the best album title I've seen in over a decade. A fifteen-song collection of lo-fi blues and manic garage



rock, the set recasts the film noir as club scene punk and social commentary. Some of it is quite cathartic.

Utilizing farfisa organ, various guitars, xylophone and blues harp, the France-based performer only brings in guests for wan backing vocals and some irrelevant bits of saxophone. Recordingwise, everything sounds like it was created on the spot in a concrete basement with one microphone and no mixer. As a result, the harmonica solos often sound over-modulated and the impassioned vocals get buried.

Yet King Automatic is smart enough to keep switching gears. The dead-on Chicago blues of “She’s Fine She’s Mine” sports impressively authentic licks and attitude. “Stop Workin’,” featuring a guitar played so hard it goes out of tune mid-song, sounds like a lost Pub Rock anthem. Further, such teeth-gnashing delights as “Two Grams” and “It’s A Girl Thing” betray a prickly observational bent.

However, the King Automatic is at its very best when the lead guitar is highlighted on such instrumentals as “I Walk My Murderous Intentions Home,” “Here Comes the Terror,” and “A Few Dollars Less.” These snarling, film noir numbers play out like the score of an exploitation movie too sleazy for even late-night cable TV. This resultant melding of nostalgia and forbidden cult rhythms imbues the set with undeniable redemptive power. Kingautomatic.com. (Ken Burke)

Flaming Sideburns – Keys To The Highway (Bitzcore Records)

Finland’s Flaming Sideburns (although singer Eduardo Martinez is from Argentina) have been around for

eleven to twelve years now, as one of the many excellent Scandinavian Rock & Roll bands who are determined to keep Detroit Rock & Soul and the Pacific Northwest garage rock of the 60s/70s alive and kicking forever, if possible....even if very few people in the US give a good goddamn about this music! Unlike their brethren The Hellacopters, The Soundtrack Of Our Lives, and Gluecifer, these guys tend to favor 60s music more than that from the 70s....to me, a good thing. Their recording career has primarily consisted of singles and live releases (at last count, they’ve done four live albums and a couple of full-length compilation CDs of their singles) instead of studio albums, to the extent that Keys To The Highway, their new CD, is only their third studio album release....and it’s also their best. Their first two studio efforts, Hallelujah Rock & Rollah (Save Rock & Roll in the US) from ’01, and Sky Pilots from ’03, had their moments, but the Sideburns’ original songs weren’t as consistent, nor were they as satisfying as a lot of the cover tunes these boys have recorded over the years (check out their excellent Back To The Grave comp from ’06) – it’s as if their old influences hadn’t quite been fully absorbed yet into their collective bloodstream. Not the case with Keys To The Highway – most of these songs sound like undiscovered 60s or early 70s classics – the kind that you know you’ve heard before, but just can’t quite place. Songs like “Cut The Crap” would have done The Stooges or early Saints (before Ed Kuepper discovered that the volume knob on his axe could be turned down) proud, and the awesome Lisa Kekaula of The Bell Rays also joins the band for a couple of duets with Eduardo. Great stuff! One of my faves of ’07. (As a side note, I met drummer Jay Burnside at the most recent Cavestomp – nice guy...and he got to interview The Sonics, the lucky bastid!!!) (John Oliver)

Ginger – Market Harbour (Cargo Import)

Ginger, front man/guitarist/songwriter for The Wildhearts and solo artiste, is, if nothing else, one prolific mother! Over the past four years, he and/or his band have released five or six new studio albums (depending on whether you count Howlin’ Willie Cunt’s World Of Filth, which Ginger denies doing, but it has his paw prints all over it!), at least three compilation CDs of older material/singles, and five or six official and semi-official live albums. The absolutely astonishing thing about all of his recordings has been the uniformly excellent quality of the songwriting, singing and playing. The man is clearly a living, breathing, catchy riff and hook-spewing musical monster, even if he is, for the most part, unknown throughout most of the land this side of the Atlantic. Yet,

in spite of being familiar with all of this recent material, I find myself amazed at his latest brand new CD, *Market Harbour*, released in January 2008. This new CD is, for want of a better term, a suite of twenty-one continuous songs....and hearing it for the first time reminded me of listening to Love's *Forever Changes* (a massive change from Arthur Lee's and the band's previous work) for the first time in 1967, or *The Beach Boys Today* initially in 1965 (the latter for me was the album that put Brian Wilson's writing into another stratosphere, not *Pet Sounds*). This new, incredibly ambitious, sprawling album and its songs are something altogether different from what Ginger's given us in the past....although he's been heading in some of the new directions on this new CD on his last two solo albums, 2005's *Valor Del Corazon* and 2007's *Yoni*. Only a handful of these new tunes sound like they'd easily fit into *The Wildhearts'* repertoire - "Queen Of Leaving," "Josser Bank," and maybe "Overeasy." Throughout this album, I hear a lot of Beach Boys ("Casino Bay," "Malibu Chronicle," a snippet of "In My Room," and the Smile-like instrumental passages), Pink Floyd ("House Of Moths"), the amazing UK band *The Cardiacs* - the latter not that surprising, in light of Tim Smith's and Random Jon Poole's involvement, some old 50s rock & roll ("Couple Trouble"), and other just plain gorgeous melodies and tunes. As a bonus, Ginger appears to have backed off somewhat from his, shall we say, overly-aggressive or hateful lyrics of his last three or four albums, where it appeared that his last failed love affair had totally wrecked his life and/or given him murderous thoughts (as expressed so clearly in parts of *Valor* and throughout *World Of Filth*). As he states in the beginning of "Casino Bay," the times are changing, and he's changing with them. He's still dealing with relationships, failed or otherwise, but in a more civil tone now. The only way to describe this awesome, at times lush, listening experience is psychedelic! And you really need to put aside the hour-plus, and listen to the whole CD. This will be very difficult to play live, I'm guessing, without a very large cast of players....although I've seen and heard Ginger do wonders live on some of his most complex songs with just his voice and an acoustic guitar or two. I seriously can't see this not making my "best of" list for 2008, and it's only mid-January! (John Oliver)

Bettye LaVette – Scene Of The Crime (ANTI)

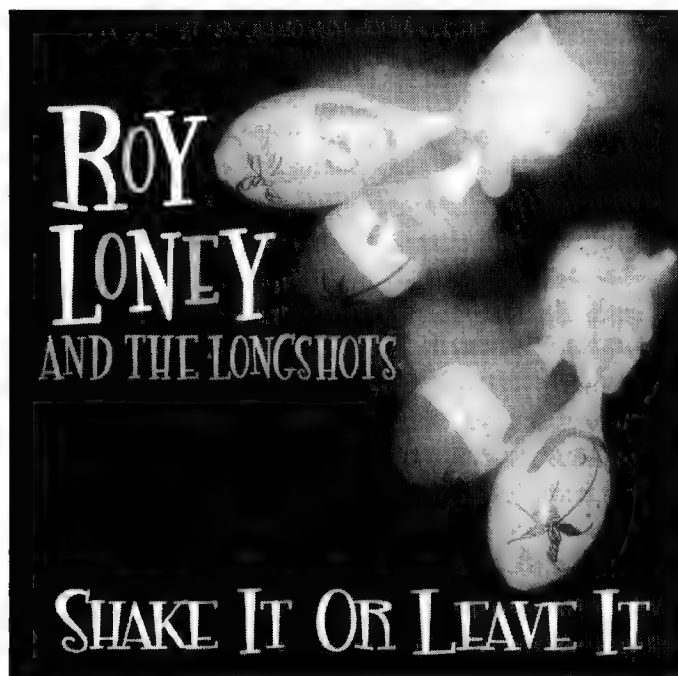
Bettye LaVette of Detroit was just sixteen years old when she had her first hit single, "My Man – He's A Lovin' Man" on Atlantic, which hit the Top 10 of the

R&B charts in 1962. Over the next decade, she recorded for a variety of smaller labels, occasionally hitting the charts ("Let Me Down Easy," in 1965), and toured quite a bit (with, among others, a young Otis Redding and James Brown). For whatever reasons (and LaVette herself has admitted that she hasn't always been the easiest person to get along with), and in spite of her powerhouse voice and killer live shows, she wasn't offered the chance to record a full-length album until 1972, for Atco. This album, intended to be titled *Child Of The Seventies*, was recorded in Muscle Shoals, featuring the cream of the crop of soul session players....and it wasn't released, leaving Ms. LaVette bitter enough to drop out of the recording end of the music biz, and do Broadway shows and the like for almost a decade. Motown signed her in '82, allegedly to help fill the void left by the departing Diana Ross, and she finally got her first LP released, *Tell Me A Lie*, which stiffed, sales-wise. Over the next seventeen to eighteen years, she recorded sporadically.....a great but lost soul artist....but then, starting around 2000, her career suddenly took an upward turn. *Child Of The Seventies* was finally released in 2000, to major critical acclaim (if less than spectacular sales), most of her older work was compiled/released on CD, and she recorded several live albums in Europe over the past six to seven years. In 2005, she struck pay dirt, with the Joe Henry-produced *I've Got My Own Hell To Raise* (on the ANTI label), a collection of songs by female writers/artists, such as Joan Armatrading, Lucinda Williams, Dolly Parton and others, interpreted through Bettye's eyes and incredibly expressive voice. This CD made a bunch of critics' Top 10 Lists for 2005...and paved the way for her even better 2007 effort, *Scene Of The Crime*. This latest album's title refers to her return to Muscle Shoals, where her last great effort there, *Child Of The Seventies*, died a quick but painful death. This time, she's recorded with southern White trash rockers *The Drive-By Truckers*, who surprisingly (to me) are the perfect band for her, laying down swampy, deep and downright soulful grooves, accompanied by original Muscle Shoals stalwarts Spooner Oldham on the keys and David Hood (head Trucker Patterson Hood's father) on bass. But the real revelation here is, not surprisingly, Bettye herself. The woman's never met a song that she couldn't make her own, or a set of lyrics that she couldn't crawl into and inhabit....and, in this case, she's singing tunes closely identified with George Jones ("Choices" – and old George reportedly loves her version!), Frankie Miller ("Jealousy"), Elton John ("Talking Old Soldiers"), and others along the lines of Eddie Hinton, John Hiatt, Willie Nelson and Don Henley....and, in every case, she's kicked the living shit out of the original version! Her voice is a combination of broken glass and rotgut

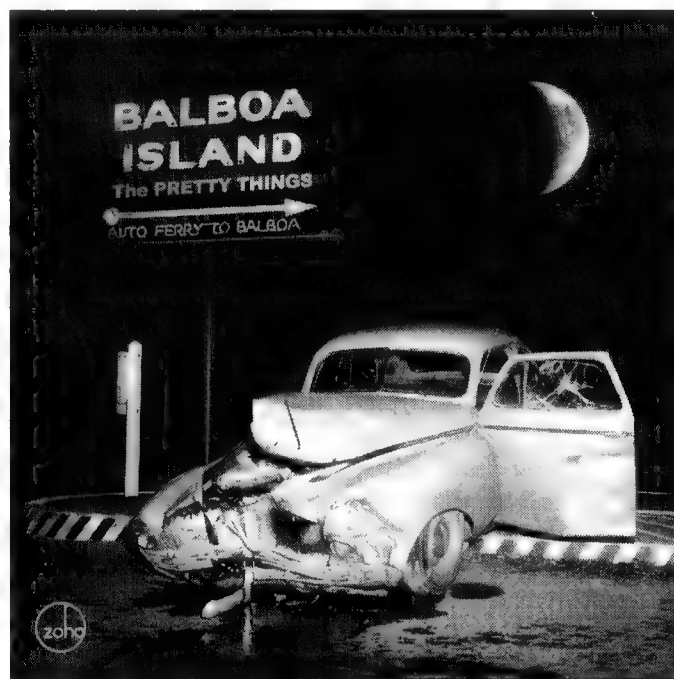
whiskey – and I mean that as a great compliment! If there's a better or more expressive singer on this planet today than Ms. LaVette at age sixty-two, someone tell me who!...And also please lemme know if there was a better album released during 2007. (John Oliver)

Roy Loney & The Long Shots – Shake It Or Leave It (Career)

Ex-Flamin' Groovie Roy Loney was last seen putting out the killer Drunkard In The Think Tank in 2004 with his Seattle band, The Long Shots. Shortly after that CD was released, Roy mentioned that he had been busy writing, and had a goodly number of other songs ready to be recorded for his next album. A couple of years later, a lot of tweaking (as reflected in the running account/diary on the Career Records web site), and here's the new album. No cover tunes this time, all originals from Roy, and, as several reviewers have pointed out already, it sounds like Professor Roy, giving us his history of Rock & Roll in twelve easy lessons! Listening to this gem, even the first time, was so much fun, as far as playing "spot the influence," that it was kinda easy to overlook the sheer excellence of the songs, Roy's singing and the band's playing....once again, a tour de force of roots rock & roll! Whether they're sounding like Johnny Cash's Tennessee Three playing Ennio Morricone-style spaghetti western muzak ("Big Fat Nada"), Roger Miller backed by the Sir Douglas Quintet ("Miss Val DuPree"), Gene Vincent with The Cramps ("Big Time Love"), Roy backed by The Yardbirds ("Don't Like Nothing"), or just Roy doing



Charlie Feathers on speed ("Raw Deal") or the Waterloo-Sunset-period Kinks ("Hamlet's Brother Happy"), it's still ALL Roy Loney and his rock & roll vision....which is as good as it gets for us old goats in this age of hip-hop, sampling, downloading music, etc. Kudos to guest stars Deniz Tek, Bobby Sutcliffe and several others! One of my absolute faves for '07, and, in my opinion, Roy's best since the early Phantom Movers days (Out After Dark) (NOTE: I also saw Roy & his latest San Francisco band, The Movers (including long-time guitarist Larry Lea and Groovies drummer Danny Mihm) back in early June 2007, and damned if he can't still bring it BIG TIME live!!!!) (John Oliver)



Pretty Things – Balboa Island (Zoho Music)

Lessee, it took nineteen years for The Pretty Things to record and put out their last studio LP, Rage Before Beauty (1999 – Cross Talk, their previous one, came out in 1980), and only eight to come up with this new one, Balboa Island....and two of the new album's songs are from a 2000 single released in the wake of Rage ("All Light Up," an ode to pot smoking that at least one critic has referred to as the band's response to recent smoking bans in clubs (?!), and the biographical "Pretty Beat"). Overall, the new one is an extremely dark record, with pain and suffering and death permeating its grooves (well – it would be grooves if it were on vinyl!). The car wreck on the album cover kinda suggests this, though. Singer Phil May's liner notes hint that it wasn't easy doing this

album...but he also suggests or wonders if it might not be the best thing they've ever done – and, to these ears at least, it's their best effort since Parachute (Rolling Stone's album of the year in 1970), and possibly since their mid-sixties R&B and blues-drenched Brit rock – when they and the Rolling Stones and Animals invented what we now call garage rock. While there are several excellent old-time (and, for that matter, modern) blues tracks on Balboa, notably "Feel Like Goin' Home," the Mississippi, Junior Kimbrough drone-like "Blues For Robert Johnson," and an incredible cover of Dylan's "Ballad of Hollis Brown," the Pretties also toss in their version of arena rock (The Who-like "Buried Alive" and aforementioned "All Light Up"), the Beatles-ish "Dearly Beloved," and "The Beat Goes On," (a perfect new set opener for the band, perhaps replacing "Road Runner," the Bo Diddley anthem they've been opening shows with for decades), and some songs that would probably sound best in a bare room with just a chair, table, and one hanging light bulb giving off light ("Living In My Skin" and the title track.). These guys, mostly in their mid-sixties now, are still alive, kicking, and showing most rockers one-half (Hell, one-third) their age how it's done.... This is shit-loads better than the last Who or Stones or any other 60s Brit contemporaries' albums. Looking forward to seeing this great band in April, when they tour the US again. (John Oliver)

Raspberries – Live On Sunset Strip (Rykodisk)

Timing has always been a problem with power-pop gods Raspberries. While they had several Top 40 hit singles in the early 70s ("Go All The Way," "I Wanna Be With You," "Let's Pretend," and "Overnight Sensation (Hit Record)"), their sound, a combination of The Beatles, Beach Boys, Small Faces, The Who and Left Banke, occurred a little too soon after the 60s heydays of these bands, to really be appreciated by anyone other than, to use front man Eric Carmen's words, "Sixteen-year old girls and the rock intelligentsia" (AKA critics with beards) – the former courtesy of Capitol Record's brilliant attempt to market the band to Hit Parader and Tiger Beat magazine, and other publications of this ilk. Unfortunately, the young girls' older brothers who were buying most albums at the time, didn't get the band. Truth be known, power pop music has only been widely accepted to any degree during two very short time frames – the British Invasion of the mid-60s, and the punk/new wave fad of '77-'79 or so. Raspberries came along just between these two periods – hence, the band's uphill struggle to achieve commercial success commensurate with its massive

talent. They left behind four albums of, for the most part, excellent quality music (the last one, Starting Over, was Rolling Stone's Album of the Year in '74), inspiration for a ton of younger bands following in their footsteps, and, sadly, a lot of personal hard feelings when the band broke up, although they had already re-tooled and soldiered on after their Side 3 album, with bassist Dave Smalley and drummer Jim Bonfanti leaving and being replaced. While Eric Carmen, the classically trained one with the golden touch for writing great pop songs, was the only post-Raspberries commercial success of the bunch.... and he was a huge one for awhile, with three Top Ten solo songs ("All By Myself" in '75, "Hungry Eyes" and "Make Me Lose Control" in the late 80s), the band members all felt there was a lot of unfinished business, as far as Raspberries the band was concerned. After several aborted attempts to reunite in the 90s, the original four members finally got it together in late '04 to help open the new Cleveland House of Blues club....and they were absolutely sensational live!!! Since that supposedly one-off show, they have played another fourteen or fifteen shows through December 2007, getting better and better live. In October 2005, at the LA House of Blues on Sunset Blvd., Mark Linett of Brian Wilson/Smile fame taped the show, and it was finally released this past August in various formats (single disk with thirteen songs, double disk with a DVD of selected live songs, and a limited edition version through the band's web site, featuring the entire show on both CD and DVD, along with tons of other goodies). If I've ever heard a better sounding live show on record/CD, I can't remember it! These guys reclaim their legacy in spades, with most of their old songs sounding better (in some cases, a lot better) live here than the original studio versions. For one thing, there's actually a bottom to the sound now, and the compression so highly favored by original producer Jimmy Jenner in the studio is now gone. More importantly, these guys, simply put, sing and play their asses off!!! With three impressive lead singers – Eric C's voice and range among the best ever in pop music, Dave Smalley's C&W-tinged vocals a welcome contrast, and Wally Bryson's Lennon-like voice sounding just like it did in '74, their real forte, vocal-wise, was their killer harmonies, abundantly present here. Add to that Wally B's loud and, more importantly, melodic guitar pyrotechnics, Jim B's Keith Moonish drumming, and Eric's classically-trained piano on many of the tunes, plus extra musicians, appropriately called "The Overdubs," to ensure that they can capture their most complex songs ("Overnight Sensation," "I Can Remember") properly live....and the only real basis for comparison I can think of is Brian Wilson's large band he's been touring with the past few years....with a similar, fully realized, mind-

blowing sound. This band is ungodly great live! It'll be a shame if the public misses out again, over thirty years later. Buy this, dammit!!!!...(John Oliver)

The Solution – Will Not Be Televised (Wild Kingdom Import)

The Hydromatics – The Earth Is Shaking (Suburban)

Powertrane – Beyond The Sound (Motor City Music)

Speaking of prolific mothers, the Motor City's Scott Morgan is yet another one – he has three CDs with different bands, all released over the last six months or so....and all are well worth picking up and keeping on your CD player for extended periods of time. Scott started out in the late 60s with The Rationals, joined up with Fred "Sonic" Smith and Scott Asheton after the MC5 and original Stooges broke up, to form the legendary Sonics Rendezvous Band in the mid-70s, and has been keeping the rock & roll/soul faith alive for well over forty years at this point! The Solution is his Swedish big soul band that he founded several years ago with Nicke Andersson of The Hellacopters. Unlike on their debut album *Communicate!* from several years ago, the band relies heavily on covers on their sophomore CD, including tunes by the Staples Singers ("Heavy Makes You Happy"), Johnnie Taylor ("Hijackin' Love"), Peggy Scott/Jojo Benson ("Pickin' Wild Mountain Berries"), Ike & Tina ("You Got What You Wanted"), Clarence Carter ("Funky Fever") and several others, as well as four soulful originals. Tons of horns and chick backing vocals a-plenty here, showcasing Morgan's great voice....Personally, I believe Scott's one of the all-time great White soul singers, and here's proof!

The Hydromatics are Scott's Sweden-based hard rocking band, formed about eleven or twelve years ago, not surprisingly by Nicke of the Hellacopters (again!), who, with guitarist Tony Slug of the Dutch band The Nitwitz, got together primarily to play covers of Sonics Rendezvous Band tunes. Who better to sing them than former SRB kingpin Scott Morgan himself? – So he joined up. The Earth Is Shaking is The Hydromatics' third full-length CD, and their best one yet. While Nicke left the band several years ago, they now have Celibate Rifles mainstay Kent Steedman on flame-thrower guitar, who, with Tony Slug and Scott (a motherfucker of a guitarist himself), creates a three-axe attack that takes no prisoners. Highlights of the new album include the Detroit-styled opener "Standing At The Juke," covers of Otis Clay's "Baby Jane," the Stones' "All Down The Line," and SRB's

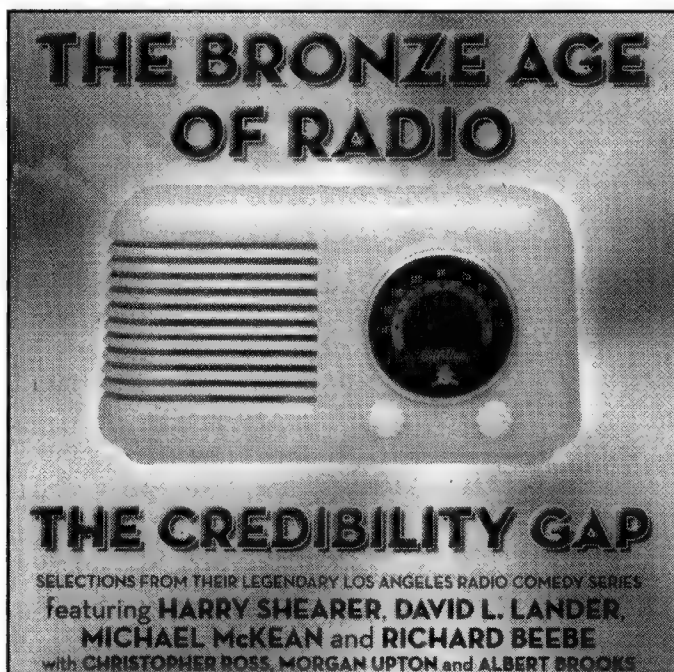
"Mystically Yours," and Scott M's singing, of course. A keeper.

Powertrane is Morgan's Detroit-based rock & soul outfit, featuring guitarist Robert Gillespie, formerly of the Torpedoes and Rob Tyner Band, and Mitch Ryder's long-time guitarist. Aside from a cover of Tyner's "Taboo," this new release, Powertrane's studio debut (they put out a live album with Ron Asheton and Radio Birdman's Deniz Tek several years ago) is all originals penned by Morgan and Gillespie. Another ball-busting example of Detroit rock & roll at its finest, featuring a real legend on vocals. This CD is available via Mr. Gillespie's web site; the new Hydromatics' from Scott Morgan's site, and The Solution import CD will be available from Scott's site shortly. Buy all three – you'll be glad that you did! (P.S. I learned from rock historian/archivist/genuinely nice guy Alec Palao at the recent Cavestomp in NYC that he's just produced a multi-disk set of unreleased Rationals material, to be released shortly on either Ace or Big Beat.) (John Oliver)

The Credibility Gap - The Bronze Age of Radio (Varese Sarabande)

Long before *Spinal Tap* or *Laverne and Shirley*, Harry Shearer, David L. Landers, and Michael McKean honed their chops as a satiric radio comedy team. Along with newsman Richard Beebe, they fashioned these eleven audio sketches that, until now, had only been available on an independent label cassette. Some are still funny.

On the sophomoric side "Tricia's Honeymoon," provides little more than meanspirited mockery of Richard



Nixon's youngest daughter. Equally distasteful - although the impression is spot-on - "Senator Kennedy's Next Speech," portrays the Massachusetts senator explaining his role in the unexpected motel death of "Peaches Charnofsky." It's clever but soulless stuff.

Some material features smart, funny moments but lack cohesion. Their transformation of "Othello" into a black exploitation movie ad, plays out like undercooked Monty Python. A stilted over-long take off on Army recruitment films "The Big Picture," prefigures much of Shearer's later work for *Saturday Night Live* and his own public radio program *Le Show*.

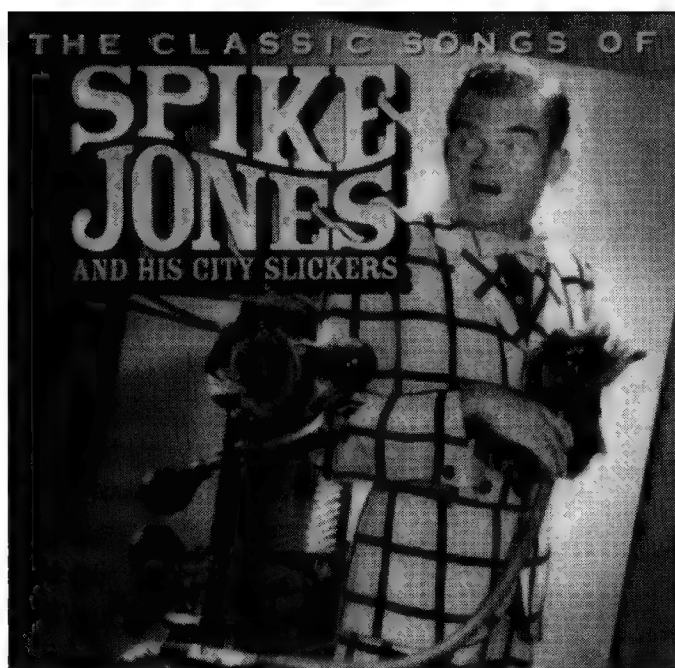
However, the Credibility Gap's freshness and zeal covered a multitude of sins. During their best bits, Landers and Shearer evoke pleasing shades of Stan Freberg as they bring Abbott & Costello's "Who's on First" routine into the rock age. The Lyndon Johnson - Walter Cronkite interview ("The L.B.J. Tape") the team parodies lacks punch-lines, but the insinuations concerning Johnson's role in J.F.K.'s assassination are still remarkably daring. Further, the deadpan delivery of "Editorial Reply," wherein a commentator defends bad driving as a form of "self-expression," is funny to the point of being scary.

Not every track is sure-fire and prospective listeners are best off knowing something about politics of the 60s and 70s, but longtime fans will definitely dig hearing these guys figuring out their comedic strengths. (Ken Burke)

The Classic Songs of Spike Jones and His City Slickers - (Varese Sarabande)

Zaniness thy name was Spike Jones. The tunes in very funny sixteen-song collection are not the original RCA-Victor hits, but versions recorded for radio during their golden era that are executed with the same remarkable abandon and skill. As a result, we are treated to such brilliant comic travesties as "The Sheik of Araby" (#19, 1943), "Cocktails for Two" (#4, 1945), "Chlo-e (Song of the Swamp)" (#5, 1945), and "Holiday for Strings" (#10, 1945) done live - sans audience. Every blatting horn, cocoanut shell horse hoof, clanging metal vibraphone, and ga-luck-gluck sounds remain remarkably intact from the recordings.

The key to the City Slickers's humor was their peerless ability to catch the listener by surprise. Their classic twitting of the Mills Brothers hit "You Always Hurt The One You Love" starts out with an overly sincere Carl Grayson vocal. Once the sentimental mood is appropriately milked, BAM! Blistering banjo-led razzmatazz and cartoony FX jump on the listener before

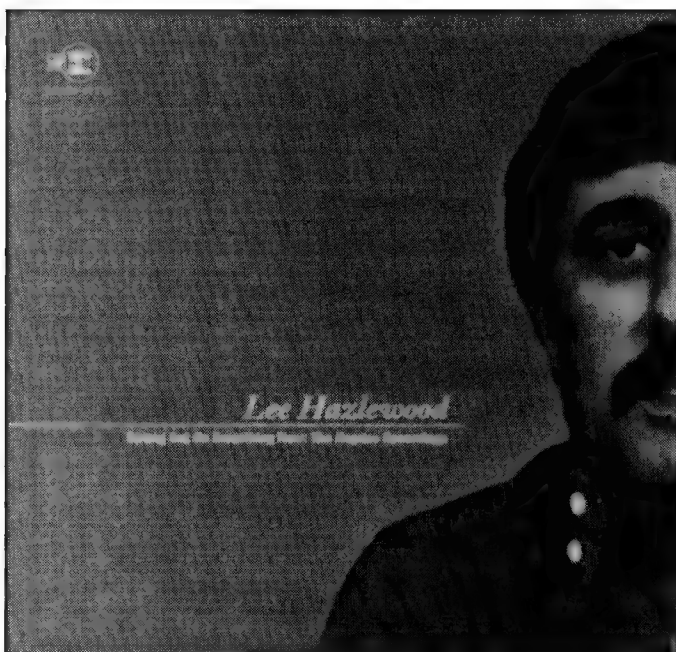


he has a chance to react. When the nation needed to thumb their noses at Adolph Hitler, the versatile Grayson trotted out a convincing Bavarian accent for "Der Fuehrer's Face" (#3, 1942), which made listeners believe that the German's probably hated the chief Nazi too.

The set has some minor flaws. The liner notes don't tell us the exact origins or dates of the recordings, and versions of the band's biggest hits ("All I Want for Christmas (Is My Two Front Teeth)," "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus") are missing. That said, if you need something to absolutely make you smile during these troubled times, this snappy collection will do the job. Ga-luck, gluck, kapweeng! VareseSarabande.com. (Ken Burke)

Lee Hazelwood - Strung Out On Something New: The Reprise Recordings (Reprise/Rhino Handmade)

Recently deceased, Lee Hazelwood's legacy largely rests on a series of hits and duets he crafted with Nancy Sinatra. That said, the eclectic founder of the Phoenix-based Viv Records and writer (under his wife's name) of Sanford Clark's "The Fool," (#7, 1956), served as producer, writer, arranger, and singer on countless sessions before cutting the distinctive tracks on this lovingly compiled two-disc, fifty-five-song collection. Boasting miniaturized reproductions of his original Reprise album covers and sleeves, the limited edition set is augmented with booklet notes by Lenny Kaye, but the music is the selling point here.



Heard today, 1964's *The N.S.V.I.P.'s* sounds like it could have been Roger Miller's lost concept album. Showcasing bluesy acoustic fills and narrative intros to each song, it ripples with wry observations ("I Had a Friend"), ironic wordplay ("Everybody Calls Me Something"), and more than a little folk protest ("Have You Made Any New Bombs Today"). Diffusing his antiauthoritarian streak with humor ("Save Your Vote for Clarence Mudd"), he

crafted an album that is both pointed and entertaining.

On 1965's *Friday's Child*, Hazelwood's sonic character becomes more expressive and complex. His country hook songs retain their sensationalistic edge ("Hutchinson Jail") and folk-hippie humor ("Me and Charlie") remains intact. However, once he cast himself as a born loser ("Four Kinds of Lonely") and fatalistic drifter ("Houston," later a Dean Martin hit), he created the most resonant persona.

Love and Other Crimes from 1968, eschews political and humorous inclinations in favor of socially conscious blues ("Rosacoke Street"), enigmatic romantic metaphors ("The House Song"), curious love songs ("She Comes Running") and romantic violence ("Pour Man"). Recorded in Paris, Hazelwood's craggy baritone was never more expressive, but the album occasionally sinks with tedious songs and cocktail piano.

Material produced on Sanford Clark ("Just Bluesin'"), Dino, Desi and Billy ("Not The Lovin' Kind"), child star Donna Butterworth ("California Sunshine Boy"), and Duane Eddy ("This Town"), spotlights the budding studio brilliance that resulted in a string of Nancy Sinatra hits. Moreover, tough edged stray singles by Hazelwood ("Charlie Bill Nelson") provide atmospheric snarl galore. In the process, this keenly remastered, occasionally compelling collection whet's the appetite for future reissues. (Ken Burke)

I Don't Think Jack Done It This Way

We're sitting in a dive called Fraizers.

People come in early to drink here.

That's what I like about Baltimore.

Where I live, the suburbs of Washington, D.C.,

There's a time and a place for everything.

Alcoholics keep to strict schedules . . .

Well, we're watching the sun set through
the glass blocks at the front of the place.

And my friend, John, puts out his cigarette, turns to me,
and says, "That guy, Gene, he's got a lot of nerve."

I'm not really listening. I'm watching the sun hit the
glass blocks
and making with the rainbow colors.

"Yeah, a lot of nerve. He just wants to be Bukowski. No
job.

Getting drunk all the time. And not working."

"He's got a job. Works in a movie theatre down the
street."

The colors are slowly darkening, fire engine red and
Halloween orange

becoming all the colors of the dark: midnight blue,
royal purple . . .

My friend, finishes his beer and lights up. "Anyway,

what's he's doing? That's
not writing. That's just typing."

It's gone dark now outside. "What's that? You talking
about Capote
talking about Kerouac? The kid's young. Give him a
break."

My friend shrugs, looks down into the empty glass in
front of him.

"Right, he's a poet, because like the best, he's full of
passionate intensity
and lacks conviction."

"Ah, so it's going to be like that, is it?" I call the
bartendress over for
two more Pabsts. Special happy hour prices: a dollar
a pop.

The cans come quickly.

John, laboring at the tab, smiles. "Well, nothing has to be
like that."

And when you stop, and really think about it, nothing
does . . .

Outside, the dark starts to seep into the bar . . .



The Black Lizard Big Book Of Pulp - (ed. Otto Penzler) Vintage Crime (2007)

As a literary critic, you get a book like this in the mail, you're not sure whether you should review it or just keep it on the coffee table to impress the dames you're lucky enough to have over for a nightcap. Hell, you could use the damn thing for a coffee table; it's that thick and heavy: over one thousand pages, with forty-five stories and two complete novels.

OK, so maybe things aren't going too well in the social department and you find yourself with enough time on your hands to get through this thing without giving yourself a hernia, what good can you say about this Big Book? We're talking pulps here, stories written primarily in the 20s and 30s for semi-literates and subhumans, when

more than five hundred titles a month hit the newsstands. That's a lot of hackwork, boys and girls. (Incidentally, the term "pulp" was not originally a term of opprobrium, but rather a reference to the material, wood pulp, from which the cheap gray paper used in the magazines was made.)

Still, from small, cheap things, big things someday, do come. There wouldn't be a Hemingway or a minimalist modern style without Dashiell Hammet. Don't doubt this. Hammet's first Continental Op story made its debut in *Black Mask* on October 1, 1923. Papa's first book, *In Our Time*, came out almost one year later. Then there's Raymond Chandler, the hardboiled poet, and one of the greatest American writers of the 20th Century. Don't take my word for it, no less a personage than W.H. Auden held his books, *The Big Sleep*, *The Long Goodbye*, *The Lady in the Lake*, to be "works of art." Here he is defining the

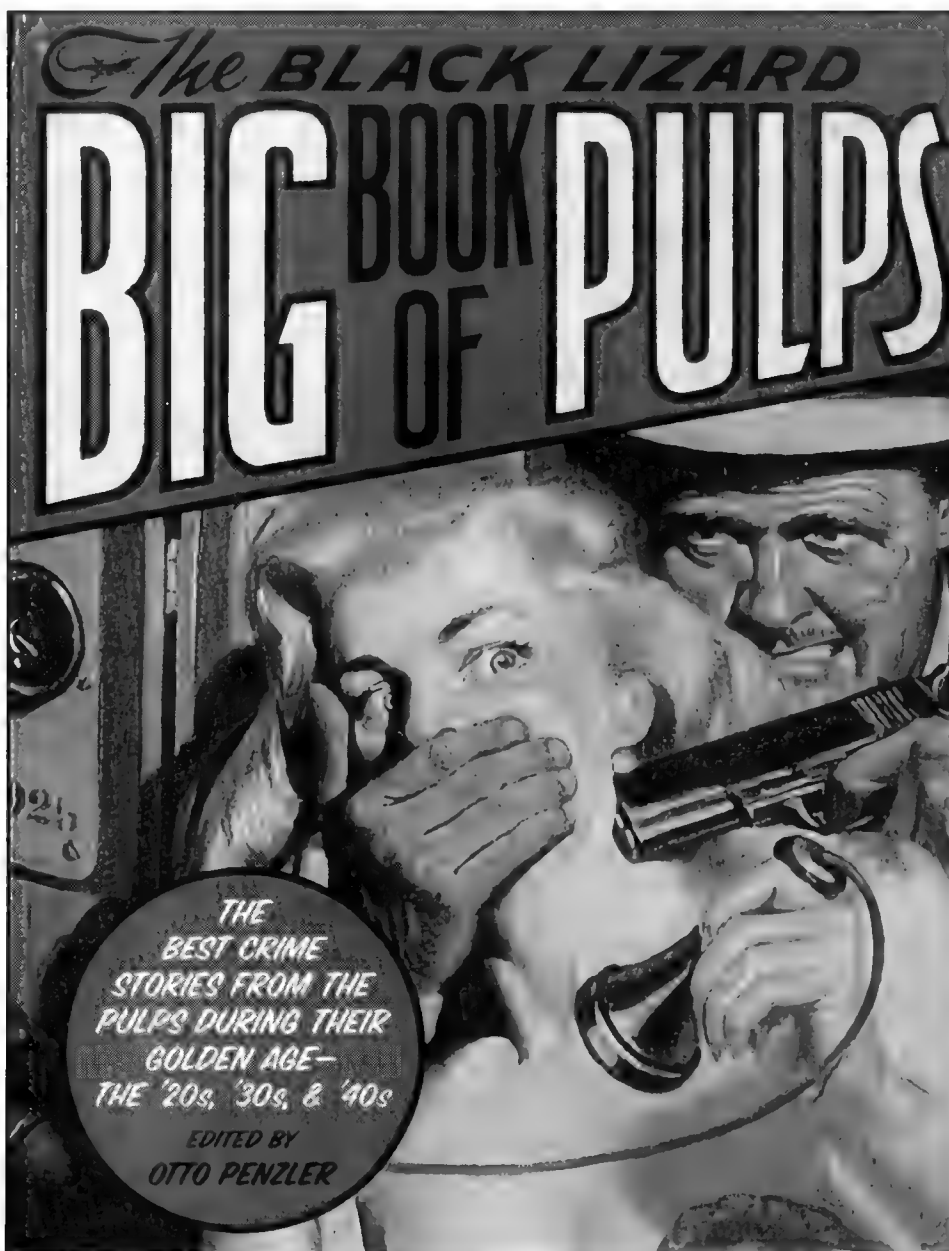
shamus, in his essay "The Simple Art of Murder":

Down these mean steets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor.

Chandler didn't publish much, seven novels and twenty-one detective stories, but what he did publish was choice. He brought style, a corruscating wit and sardonic charm to a much disparaged genre and in the process opened up the boundaries for American fiction.

In juxtaposing the sublime with the vulgar, Chandler courted the absurd and gave us the dark knight, an ordinary man in many ways but one with a heightened, poetic consciousness and almost medieval sense of ethics. In both the stories and the novels, there is radical innovation in the emphasis on scene over story - Chandler disdained plotting - in the idea that it's bold startling scenes that make the narrative, not the incidentals of the tale itself. This is almost cinematic, and it's this, perhaps more than anything else, that makes Chandler's novels so readily adaptable to the screen.

Then there's the third of the big three: James M. Cain. The Flaubert of the dime store, a hard drinking man who wrote prose so spare and lean and raw that it made you wince. Chandler hated him. "A dirty little boy writing about dirty things in a dirty way," was his description of his work. Well, yes, but that's what made it great. That and the fact that his novels and stories were, unlike Chandler's, tightly plotted, deliciously sardonic and funny in a way that civilized, well-read people would rather not think about. And no one, no one wrote, more bitterly, more hatefully, about women than Chandler (he was married four



times). You want to swear off dames forever? Start with *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Then hit *Double Indemnity*. That will cure you. There's only one of Cain's stories, here, "Pastorale," and women don't really figure in it. And it's only six pages. But it will kick you in the gut like a mule.

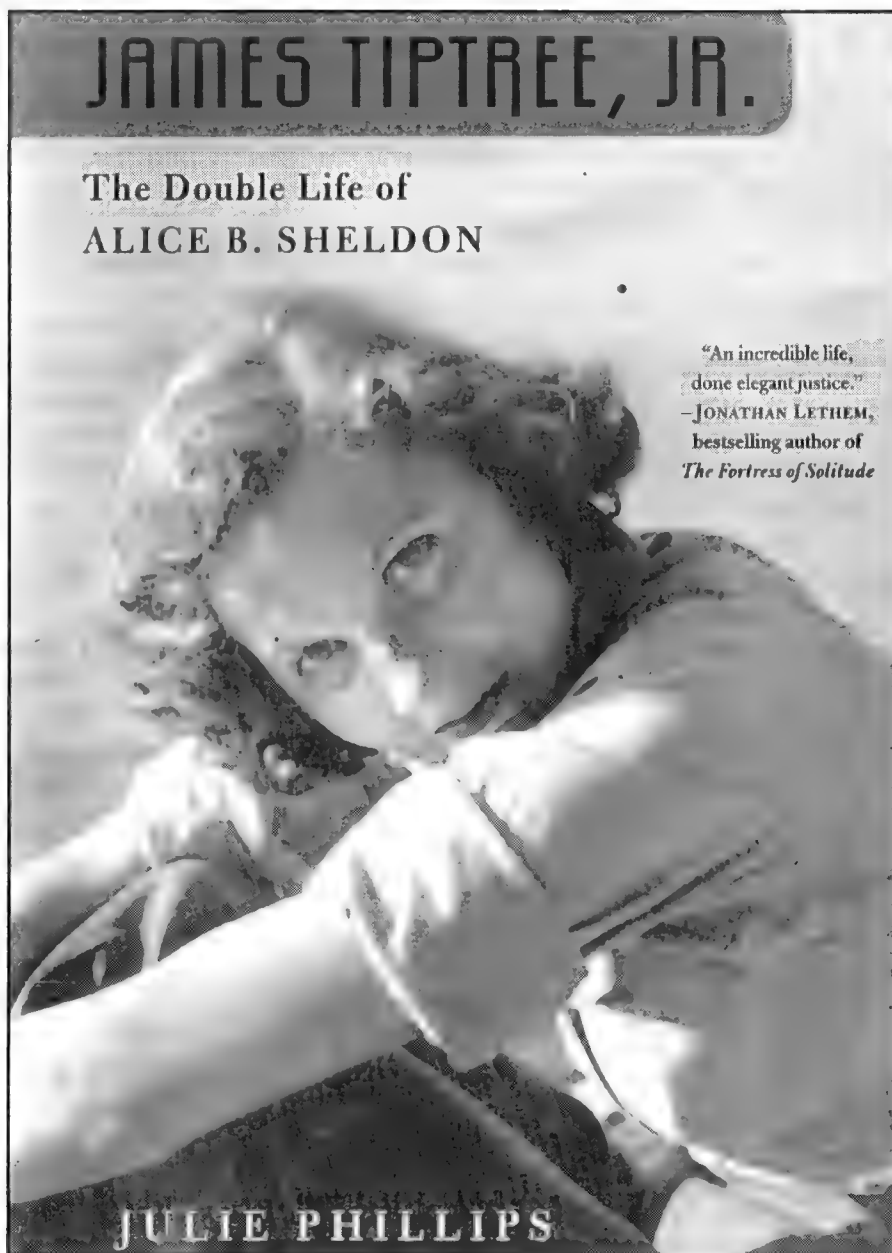
Ironically, Otto Penzler, editor and proprietor of the world-famous Mysterious Bookshop in New York City, is a far better writer than many of contributors here. So, in his many informative and cogent introductions to the stories you don't find him making extravagant claims for the work. Which is the smart way to go, since, as Penzler notes, most of the stories were "written at breakneck speed and designed to be read the same way." Aside from the aforementioned *Big Three*, then, what you do with this mountain of a book is dip into it here and there and now and then. Who knows? You may find yourself concluding that Penzler should have made more of a case for Paul Cain (he wrote the screenplay for *The Black Cat*), or Horace McCoy (*They Shoot Horses Don't They*); and certainly, for the incredibly prolific Cornell Woolrich (full disclosure: Penzler does nominate the author of *Rear Window* "the greatest noir writer who ever lived"). No matter where you land, if you don't give it too much thought, you can't help but be entertained.

James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon - Julie Phillips (2006) St. Martin's Press

Alice B. Sheldon trekked through deepest, untamed Africa as a child. She enlisted in the army and served as an officer during World War II long before it was socially acceptable for women to do such things. She became one of the first analysts for the Central Intelligence Agency and failed miserably as a chicken farmer. She battled drug addiction most of her adult life and struggled with her homosexual yearnings throughout two marriages. In 1987, she ended her life and that of her second husband, Ting, with a gunshot to the head in a murder-suicide. Along the way, she became James Tiptree, Jr., one of the most

celebrated science fiction writers of the 1960s and 70s.

To say Alice Sheldon/Tiptree is a fascinating, conflicted character falls far short of reality. That Julie Phillips' engrossing, captivating book, *James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon*, is so successful at capturing the essence of this deeply flawed yet powerful woman--or at least creates the illusion of doing so--is a remarkable accomplishment. Tiptree, as a writer, was a deeply mysterious figure by necessity, as Sheldon struggled to keep her alter ego a secret. This, naturally enough, merely stoked the fires of curiosity among the various editors she worked with and fans who read her work with much admiration. And what admiration she earned: In the 1970s her short fiction garnered her two Hugo Awards and three Nebula Awards, and in 1987 she completed the trifecta by taking home a World Fantasy



Award. That a life so cloaked in secrecy until she was “outed” by *Locus* magazine in 1977 is laid so stark and bare on the page is a little disconcerting--there’s more than a little voyeurism at play when reading the intimate details of this very private woman’s life.

Phillips does an outstanding job of bringing an immediacy and vibrant life to Tiptree’s pseudo-life. Quoting from copious letters exchanged with such authors as Harlan Ellison, Vonda McIntyre and Joanna Russ, Phillips coaxes out a picture of Tiptree as a writer longing to fit into a group but forever separated by her security blanket of deception. Tiptree flirts with women in his letters and talks macho shop flawlessly with the men. Scattered throughout the letters are sly double-entendres, hints that, in retrospect, are deliberate clues to Tiptree’s true gender. And as if Tiptree’s success and friendships weren’t enough, Sheldon eventually creates a second pseudonymous persona, that of the absurdly-named Raccoona Sheldon. The obvious implication that this was an overt, outward manifestation of the internal fracturing of Sheldon’s troubled psyche is perhaps a bit too simple as far as dime-store analysis goes, but there can be no doubt that Sheldon was clinically depressed and mentally unstable to varying degrees throughout her life. Once the safe mask of Tiptree was symbolically stripped away, her writing was never the same.

In an era where the Hemmingway archetype of the alpha-writer is still worshipped as the proactive ideal, Tiptree/Sheldon more than deserves to take her rightful place beside Papa as the female counterpoint. For those readers who’ve yet to encounter the lasting literary legacy of Tiptree, the collected volume *Her Smoke Rose Up Forever* is a fine place to start. For those already affected by her powerful, dark prose, James Tiptree, Jr.: *The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon* offers a whole new level of insight and appreciation for one of the greatest genre writers of the 20th century. (Jayme Lynn Blaschke)

Lester Dent’s Zeppelin Tales - Lester Dent (2006) Heliograph Incorporated

Lester Dent is best-known as the creator of the famed pulp hero Doc Savage, but the prolific Dent wrote many adventure yarns before he ever got around to chronicling the Man of Bronze’s adventures. In the early part of the 1930s, with Germany’s famed *Graf Zeppelin* having circumnavigated the globe and regularly ferrying passengers from Europe to the Americas and back, dirigibles looked poised to become the dominant transportation of the future. Dent, sensitive to the romance

of these giant ships of the air plying the skies, wasted no time in turning out a string of action-adventure tales that subsequently appeared in such venues as *Air Stories*, *Sky Birds* and *Scotland Yard*. *Lester Dent’s Zeppelin Tales* collects these epic yarns for the first time and does an impressive job of it.

There is a grand total of five stories presented here: “Zeppelin Bait” (1932), “Blackbeard’s Spectre” (1930), “Peril’s Domain” (1931), “Helene was a Cannibal” (1931) and “A Billion Gold!” (1931). At the time, editors could be a heavy-handed lot, rewriting and re-titling stories extensively, and Dent was not immune to this practice. Each of these stories is restored from the text of Dent’s original manuscripts, and an essay from editor Matthew Goodman details the process through which that was achieved. The book also includes research notes transcribed from Dent’s files, Dent’s publication notes and also a glossary for 1930s slang and terms that have fallen out of usage.

The stories themselves are violent, bloody affairs, often revolving around the hijacking of an airship by a criminal gang for some nefarious purpose. In this aspect, at least, there is a feeling of repetition save for the opening story, “Zeppelin Bait,” which takes place during World War I and centers around the hunt for a German spy feeding the zeppelin *Red Shark* target intelligence for bombing runs. There are crosses and double-crosses, rampant suspicion and plenty of fisticuffs as the protagonist of the story is the sort who’d rather fight his way out of a problem than reason his way out. Even so, compared to the other stories “Zeppelin Bait” is a rather staid affair. In “Blackbeard’s Spectre” a pirate zeppelin finds itself in the south seas, it’s crew locked in a life-or-death struggle for survival against cannibals. “Peril’s Domain” takes that a step further, landing a purloined airship in an Arctic wasteland filled with hostile Eskimos and a stranded U-boat. Clearly, Dent had no qualms when it came to exotic settings. Nor did he flinch from a casual, ubiquitous racism throughout the writings collected here. Unremarkable for fiction of the time, perhaps, but to modern sensibilities the off-hand remarks and attitudes are more than a little jarring.

Dent was never considered a great stylist, and there is nothing here that will change that perception. He was a great storyteller, though, and the gritty, balls-to-the-wall action is lean and direct, getting to the point in a way seldom seen today. For fans of the golden age of pulps, this is a must-have addition to the library. For everyone else, it’s a fascinating window into a bygone era. (Jayme Lynn Blaschke)

Visions From Within the Mechanism: The Industrial Surrealism of Jeffery Scott - Jeffery Scott (2007) Baby Tattoo Books

In this digital age, there's a wealth of inventive, striking artwork clamoring for attention. Galleries, bookshelves and websites are literally chok full of all manner of grand visions created by inspired artists worldwide. This is truly a renaissance age, where digital photography and computer enhancement have opened up a seemingly infinite vista of possibilities. The end result is a spoiled populace, an audience jaded to the point of indifference as an over-abundance of visual wonder parades by, desperate for some fleeting acknowledgement.

In light of this, it is all the more remarkable the immediate, arresting impact the work of Jeffery Scott has in his first collection, *Visions from Within the Mechanism*. These are images that are not content to merely grab the reader's attention, but rather kick your eyeballs out through the back of your skull and chuckle about it afterward.

There's a disconcerting, tactile quality to each of Scott's images presented here that continues to draw the disbelieving eye searching for some seam, some out-of-place smudge or error that offers proof the haunting scenes are not real. Scott is inarguably a master of digital manipulation. Beginning with a simple photo, he works his magic by adding layers of texture and effects, slicing and distorting and turning what was once simple and straightforward into a complex composite that is blatantly impossible, yet gifted with a powerful veneer of reality. No, not reality. *Hyper-reality*. The women that are so often his subjects--many nude, others in corsetts or various fetish garb--rarely make it through his manipulations as mere women. Biomechanical cyborgs are a recurrent theme, android pleasure models wandering back alley ways with sections of flesh missing, exposing circuitry and gears beneath. Panels pop open at random, a gaping midrift here exposing a tiny, angry woman who calls the shots inside the larger in one instance and a shiny chrome endoskeleton in another.

One of Scott's more powerful effects is creating the illusion of age in many of the images. The twisted, grotesque post-Matrix science fiction imagery is striking in its own right, but juxtaposed with dust, scratches and sepia tone they rise to a whole new level. They become artifacts, leftover remnants of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or a haunting vision of an alternate 1920s imagined by the brothers Quay. The effect is not unlike peering through the veil between worlds, and seeing a parallel reality every bit as alien as one in a different galaxy while familiar at the same time.

There are snippets of beauty here as well--a golden angel, butterflies lifting a woman aloft--as well as dark, horrific imagery equal parts freak show and fascism. But all of it is inspired, and all of it good. Scott is a distinctive talent, and the fact that this is merely his first book makes him one artist to watch. (Jayme Lynn Blaschke)

The Devil's Party - A History Of Charlatan Messiahs (2001) - Colin Wilson (Virgin Books)

Every one in Rock Theriault's peripatetic religious cult knew he was crazy. Hell, he claimed he was God. Enjoyed disciplining his followers with the flat side of axe handles. Forcibly circumcised one unruly member with a knife. Broke every toe on the foot of another and then pulled out eleven of the miscreant's healthy teeth with a pair of pliers. Still, it wasn't until The Rock sawed off the arm of a female lover with a carpet knife, an operation that took half a day, that his cult began to see the light.

So what confluence of forces combine to create



*Aleister Crowley: One of the whack jobs
profiled in The Devil's Party.*

misguided monsters like Theriault? Or any self-proclaimed messiah for that matter?

Snap judgment would lead one to conclude that this God delusion roots itself in deep feelings of inferiority spawned in unhappy childhood. While that might explain Charles Manson and David Koresh, for example, it doesn't explain John Humphrey Noyes, a 19th Century New England clergyman, the founder of a successful free-love commune in Oneida, New York.

Well let's just forget about John Humphrey Noyes; he was a wonderful man, and as we all know, nice guys not only finish last, they are also not very interesting to read about. Fortunately for Wilson's readers, most cult leaders are not nice guys - Not just ordinary sex, no, mention of women as women, the kinder, gentler sex, apparently have little chance of falling prey to such grandiose delusions. Sociologists call these man types "King Rats," the five percent of the population so dominant in personality as to almost invariably become leaders of whatever pack they join or form. Moreover, they suffer from what writer A.E. Van Vogt termed, "Right Man Syndrome": an inability, under an circumstances, to admit fault. Presented with evidence of wrongdoing, such a man will fly into a murderous rage. As they suffer too, from deep feelings of inferiority, to contradict a Big Cheese is to hold up a mirror; thus destroying the delusion of infallibility. Mirrors then, are not what is wanted, adulatory audiences, followers allowing the delusion to bloom and grow, is what is needed.

Give the King Rats, real power, as with Hitler or Pol Pot, and you get the death of millions on order. For mad dictators, such as these, power is the kick, the drug that helps sustain the insane notion of superiority. That and the millions of citizens often helping fuel the delusion.

But what of the rogue messiah with the smaller audience? This Jesus-wannabe does not have power or multitudes telling him he is like unto God, what sustains this lesser divinity? Power in the form of exercise of dominance over the few disciples, yes, of course, but what else? Wilson argues it is sex. Not just ordinary sex, no, it is the satisfying of a craving for highly unusual sex. Hubba, hubba.

Jim Jones made some of his flock defecate in their partner's mouths. Aleister Crowley demanded his mistress allow herself to be penetrated by a goat. Manson had his followers copulating with anything with a pulse.

Yes, these King Rats are special people all right, combining the Right Man's craving for domination with the serial killer's urge for the ultimate sexual fulfillment. Carefully mix the two types, and you almost inevitably wind up with a Frankenstein monster, a budding sociopath, mad, bad, and dangerous to know.

Wilson's adroit and fascinating study also looks into, at great depth, the psychology of discipleship. What he discovers, not too surprisingly, is that the believers are even more adept at self-deception than those they serve. Which makes perfect sense when you stop and think about it. After all, does it not take less effort to convince oneself that your lover's arm must be hacked off than for the lover to persuade herself to sit for the butchery? You are giving yourself up to God, and as God is infallible, you do not question, you obey. Sound familiar? Just thank your God that the Evangelical next door hasn't dipped into Leviticus too closely. Otherwise you'd be long dead for having dared to violate the Sabbath by mowing your front lawn.

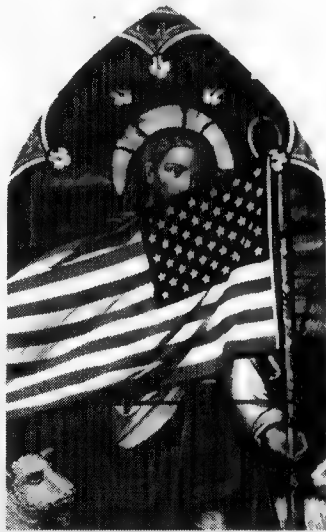
American Fascists - The Christian Right And The War On America (2007) - Chris Hedges (Free Press)

Meet the new boss. Not the same as the old boss. We have one quarter of our peoples now firmly in the Evangelical camp. And they are loaded and ready for bear, bubba. That means they come out to vote, several times a day if they have too, and if that's not enough, they'll tinker with the Diebold machines. And it's getting late early out there. Bush and the Republicans, pursuing a strategy of revolution from within, have placed thousands of Born Agains at mid-level government positions, allowing them to not-so-subtly exert their influence on their more accomplished superiors, while continuing to surreptitiously campaign for their fellow Republicans. It is rot from within, and the genius of this approach is that these faceless fascist bureaucrats, as hirees, not appointees, cannot be fired. They can only be removed for criminal activities or gross incompetence, which means, they're in for life unless they "decide" to leave. And why would they? The Republican-cum-Christian-Right stranglehold on government is almost complete.

So this book is something akin to closing the barn door after the horses have run off; nevertheless, it is a fascinating read. Hedges gets inside the hearts and minds of the individual evangelical and then moves outside to show us, up close and personal, what all of the inherent idiocy, cruelty and cupidity of the movement's - which he calls Dominionists - have wrought. If you know your history, you can't help noticing the uncanny parallels to Hitler and the Nazi's rise to power in the 1920s - the grassroots appeal to the working class, the emphasis on patriotism and national pride, the scapegoating of liberals, immigrants and artists as the source of social ills. Hedges, a foreign correspondent for The New York Times

AMERICAN FASCISTS

THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT AND THE WAR ON AMERICA



CHRIS HEDGES

Author of *Losing Moses on the Freeway*

and a Harvard Divinity School graduate, argues, and argues persuasively, that there is still time left, to stop the Religious Right from the “process of slowly dismantling” our democracy and rebuilding it as religious tyranny, the American fascism of his book’s title. For now, the fascists have to work within the system, let teachers, teach, judges, judge, the media continue to report, and so on. But can you see anything, anything that tells you this is so? That there are any battles left to be fought? The Supreme Court gave the presidency to Bush. We invaded a country posing no threat to us solely to, after all other reasons were exposed as lies, bring them freedom, i.e., our form of morality, a morality rooted in the Bible. Gays, feminists, liberals, the intelligentsia, atheists, in short, anyone to the left of a Baptist is being labeled as an enemy of this burgeoning

state. Tax cuts have virtually eradicated the middle class and turned the country into a plutocracy. Laws like The Patriot Act are being enacted, eviscerating what is left of our personal freedoms. The press, in the interests of fairness and balance, marched in lockstep for the President’s war, despite ample evidence that the reasons for doing so were, almost from the time of their initial publication, complete fabrications. Moreover, the Fourth Estate continues to add insult to injury by allowing the lunatic fringe of the right to have its say on what should be non-debatable facts like global warming, waterboarding as torture, and evolution. Is that fair and balanced? Is it? If you were writing a story about the Holocaust for The Washington Post, would you throw in a quote from the President of Iran to show that there was a general disagreement over this “issue”? What we’re getting is pseudo-reportage portraying world events as conforming to Biblical prophecies so as to deceive the public into giving the fascists more money and more power. In any other era, a man claiming that mass murder was justified because God told him it was right and proper would have been locked deeply away in a lunatic asylum. Today, he gets to live in the White House.

Truly, we are living in the end times, my friends, and pace, Hedges, there is little you, nor I can do about it. It’s all over but the shouting. Obama, Clinton, Huckabee, they’re all part of the same hypocrisy, rich men and women working to protect their interests while grasping for greater power. They speak of personal freedoms, but their campaign coffers are lined with the money

from monopolistic corporations and vested interests. They vow that with their election, truth will out, but as truth is relative, and a mere matter of expediency, facts are treated as if they were opinion. They talk of principles, but but they are the principles of the Falwells and the Robertsons of the world, obscenely wealthy charlatans cherry-picking from the “Good Book” for their inspiration. Not the New Testament, which speaks of a camel more easily passing through a needle’s eye than a rich man entering the kingdom of heaven, no a book far less humane, far more cavalier in its attitudes toward the multitudes. Loosely translated, it’s known here as My Struggle. Among the power elite in the Christian Right, it

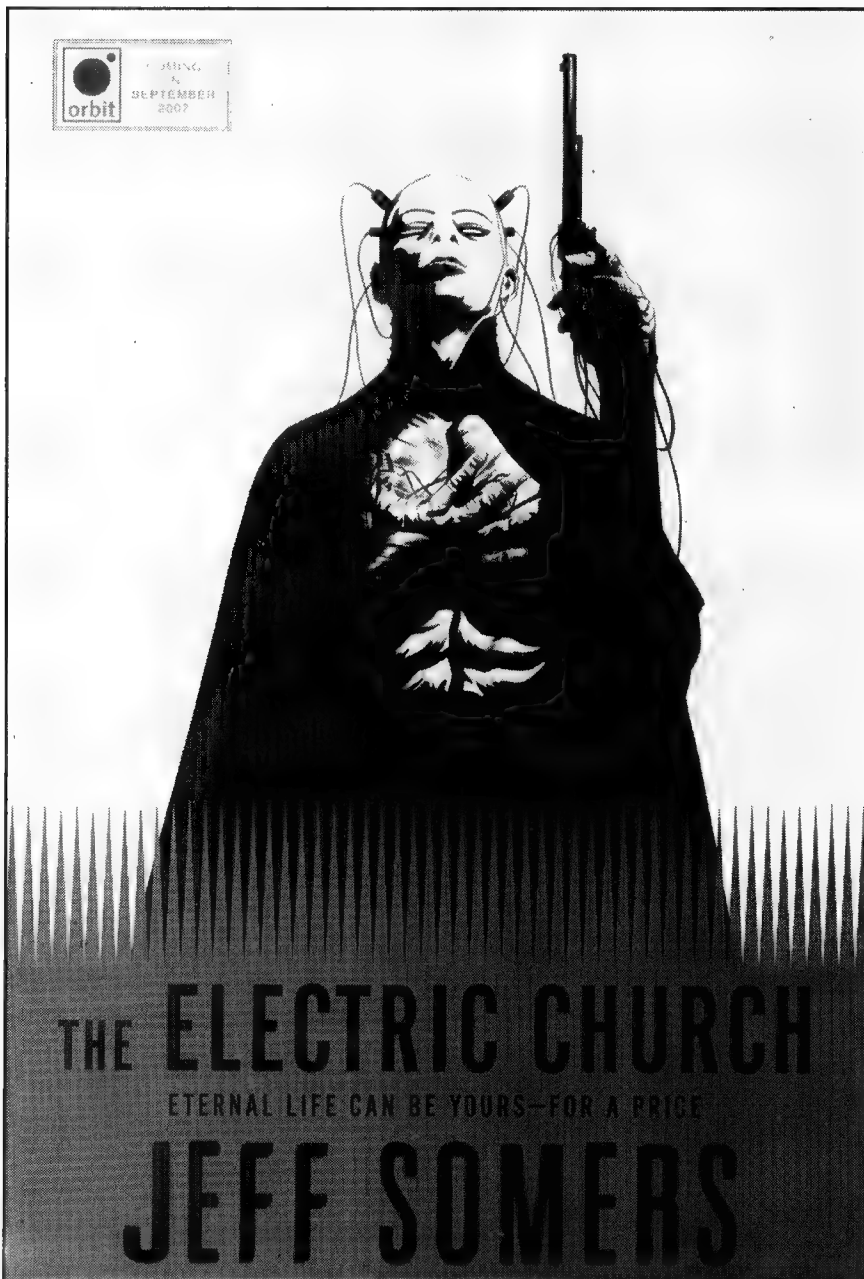
is much revered and celebrated. As is April 20th, the day of the author's birth.

The Electric Church - Jeff Somers (2007) Orbit

A thrilling, top-notch roller coaster ride filled with all manner of thrills, spills and chills that, in the process manages to turn the conventions, if there can even be said to be conventions, of cyberpunk on its head. Like Neuromancer, the William Gibson novel to which it owes a tremendous debt, The Electric Church exploits and explores weighty themes like artificial intelligence, Orwellian totalitarianism, genetic engineering and real

and fabricated war as the organizing principles of society. Happily for the reader, Somers' work possesses little of the portmanteau technospeak littering Gibson's pioneering effort, and because it is filtered through a comic noir sensibility, it is a much more entertaining read. The plotting is wonderfully complicated, the story, fairly simple: Avery Cates is a gunner, a second-tier, albeit successful assassin working out of New York in a blasted post-Apocalyptic world sometime in the near future. A world something like a Bush-Cheney Utopia: a new world order called the System of Federated Nations, governed by a faceless Joint Council whose will is enforced by brutal and amoral cops at the local level and, above them, the unbelievably nasty System Security Force (SSF). The world itself is now populated essentially by a small coterie of the

disgustingly rich with the remainder, an underclass so impoverished and hopeless, that a life of quiet desperation is no longer even a memory. In large cities like New York and London, there is still an "uptown," but getting to it, for the average citizen, is a virtual impossibility. In fact, so violent and anarchic is the "downtown," that just getting thru the day alive is a miracle. A large miracle. But that's the point, you're not supposed to survive, you're expected to, needed to, die. Decrease the surplus population and all that but also to provide training fodder and amusement for the cops. Down these impossible streets our anti-hero goes, keeping to the shadows, but when Avery takes down a cop, the SSF chief has him picked-up, scuffed-up, set harshly down, and given a choice that is no choice: assassinate Denis Squalor, the founder of the Electric Church, or die a slow, painful death. Either way, death is certain as said Church is a fast growing and dangerous cult, all of whose members are cyborgs with transplanted brains. They are unbelievably fast, incredibly strong, and have little guilt as far as killing is concerned. In fact, that's how they make converts, aka Monks: by murdering people. Lure some derelict into an alley while talking about eternity, pop him, and then take the body to one of their centers for processing. The Church has been going about this business for quite a while now. Word on the street is that there are millions of Monks working the conversion racket. Maybe tens of millions. Programmed,



inexhaustible hitmen fanatically loyal to and protective of their founder, is one of them. And, aye, here's the rub: the Monks all look exactly alike, and Squalor, their founder, is one of them.

Leash - Jane Delnn (2002)

Semiotext(E)

This transgressive lesbian novel had some Congressman screaming for funding withdrawal after a selection from it was read on NPR in 2001. This is understandable, as *Leash* contains scenes involving water sports and anal sex. With a dog! Oh, the humanity! The humanity! Have we, at long last Senator, lost all sense of decency? More importantly, does anyone in the audience have Terry Gross' phone number? She ain't much to look at, but if this is the kind of thing she digs, I want at her.

Still, it's kind of ironic that *Leash* has raised so many hackles, as this dark comedy is about pushing the pursuit of masochism to its logical extremes. And to be fair to the fascist Republicans presently working overtime to erode our civil liberties and eviscerate our First Amendment rights, DeLynn's prose is so cool and detached, and, at times, such a skillful parody of French decadents like Huysmans and Mirabeau, that it's almost impossible for the casual reader not to take her seriously. For the bibliophage, that is, the rest of us, those with jaded palates and a decided taste for the bizarre, we can pour ourselves a drink, stretch out and relax and revel in this comte cruel concerning a New York journalist's gradual and insidious surrender to a most unusual dominatrix.

If you're looking for titillation, gentle, depraved reader, look elsewhere: this is the most savage of satires, taken to extremes beyond your imaginings. Beyond literary parody as well: "Through the path of desire, I have achieved desire." In a very real sense, too, *Leash* is a cautionary tale, a warning to those who would yield to the deepest, darkest part of themselves. Strong meat, even for libertines holding to the maxim that the only way to deal with temptation is to yield to it.

America in the 70s - Edited by Beth Bailey and David Farber (2004)

CultureAmerica

Forget "That 70s Show" and "I Love the 70s." If you really want to know what the Plaid Decade was like, this is the book for you. "America in the 70s" offers nine essayists exploring a whole range of topics at a depth rarely encountered. Get beyond the stereotypes and, if old

enough, you'll find yourself remembering long-forgotten headlines and memories that have been blurred by the constant barrage of televised banalities and stereotypes. After all, there was a time that plaid couch looked good.

One of the most fascinating chapters concerns the Bicentennial celebration. The behind-the-scenes politicking fascinates as one discovers that the event was not only staged but rigged, and a market for more shoddy trinkets than the local Walmart. The price on the heads of any demonstrations by left-wingers was high, indeed. Consider Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo's comment about turmoil in general: "I'm gonna make Attila the Hun look like a faggot." And he was a Democrat. The times were changing, all right, and headed for the world of Reagan and all that's happened since.

After all, the seventies embraced, as author Jefferson Cowie points out, both the fiercest labor push in history and the time when labor began, in many ways, to turn right, both against Vietnam protestors they despised for their perceived carefree lives and affirmative action programs that threatened their jobs. It was the time when Archie Bunker was both a target of satire and a loveable character. Archie, in fact, was a nearly-perfect rendition of the day's blue collar worker, not so much bad as frightened by the changes that eventually destroyed his security and the viability of unions.

Equally interesting is Peter Braunstein's "Adults Only," which captures Times Square before it became the equivalent of New York City's Disneyland. I remember walking those streets on my first visit to New York, and while those who lived in that neighborhood may hardly miss those times, I find the shoes have been polished until there's nothing left but feet: There's a there there, and it looks like every shopping mall in America turned inside out. Braunstein details those bygone days when Times Square was both daunting and alluring, the place where sex found a public market and its disappearance perhaps accounting for the now almost acceptable status of pornography.

The constant reminders of stagflation -- what seemed to be unresolvable tensions in the economy -- remind one of days when kids' shoes were just as much a matter of status as they are today...but nothing worth stealing.

Of special relevance throughout the book, but especially in William Graebner's "America's Poseidon Adventure," is an all-too-familiar longing for the apocalypse by the "most" religious of the country's citizens, reflected in bestselling novels and disaster flicks like that of the essay's title. Yet, Graebner notes, musicians like David Bowie and politicians like Jimmy Carter were looking, if failing, to find a way out of the now almost forgotten Cold War glaze of missiles bearing mind-numbing loads

of nuclear destruction.

More than anything, this book reminds anyone who lived through the era that nostalgia is almost always a mere fuzzing over of the details one most wishes to forget.

One need only think of the Rolling "Shattered," with its propulsion and energy all harnessed to describe a New York City that was more or less dangerous than it is now, depending on the day. (Paul Toth)

Sleaze Knees Ain't So Easy When She's A Freeze Squeeze Tease

By Jim Lopez

The dry hay folds against a grey sky
Little boys nuzzle up for panties and pie
The bamboo stalks high above the clouds contented with no reign
She turns a corner and hopes in vein
While the detonating wire severs our cares
And the plasma bottles search for salvation's fare

Stones flanked by the ground they lie upon
Mommies rest in tombs of napalm
Fathers soaked in rusted pastures
Dogs demurred for hungry masters
Buildings crumbled into calculated spectacles
Little girls fumbled their nubile freckles

Eyebrows stretched to the backs of heads with worry
Toes no longer curled to Eros' passionate fury
Veritas spits its entire venom
All laid dead with no momentum
And one last General stood cracked hands in pockets torn inside out
Because the fate of the country rested upon one man's clout

The oboe haunts us all in beauty, mastery and formation
Disposing men with the stroke of the bow and stringed vibration
The Whore breathes through the curtain one last time
While we all lie under a pile of lime
And if we ever assumed might was right
May we never burn in careless plight

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